Chapter 7.3: Forced Displacement and Famine

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Chapter 7.3: Forced Displacement and Famine

7.3.1 Introduction

1. As part of its mandate to establish the truth regarding past human rights violations, the Commission conducted an inquiry into displacement and famine in Timor-Leste during 1974-1999. This inquiry was critical to understanding the story of human suffering and human rights violations associated with the conflict because displacement was a defining feature of the years of conflict in Timor-Leste. Almost every East Timorese person who lived through these years suffered some form of displacement, and many were displaced several times.

2. Displacement and its consequences occurred repeatedly during the period of the Commission’s mandate.
• As early as 1974 the Commission learned there were cases of villagers fleeing the violent consequences of growing inter-party tensions.

• The civil war of August-September 1975 caused tens of thousands of people to be displaced, most for short periods within Timor-Leste, but some forcibly to Indonesian West Timor.

• The Indonesian invasion of 7 December 1975 triggered the evacuation of a majority of the population into mountain and forest areas under Fretilin control, in numbers that were so large that they put an unbearable strain on Fretilin’s resources and organisational capabilities. Even after Indonesian forces stepped up their attacks and ended the relatively settled lives of those living in these areas, the Fretilin leadership went to great lengths to prevent people from coming out of the forest and mountains, including by the use of harshly punitive measures against those suspected of wanting to do so.

• The massive campaigns waged by Indonesian forces between mid-1977 and late 1978 made the already difficult conditions in which hundreds of thousands of East Timorese people in the forest and mountains were living intolerable, finally forcing the leadership to permit them to surrender to Indonesian forces.

• Once in Indonesians hands they faced an even worse fate in “resettlement camps”: there the Indonesian military made utterly inadequate provision for their everyday needs and placed restrictions on their freedom of movement which made it impossible for camp inmates to provide for themselves. The result was a famine which took thousands of lives, largely because the Indonesian military permitted international relief agencies to operate in Timor-Leste only once it decided that it had achieved its military objectives.

• In the 1980s some of those living in the camps were allowed to return to their home villages but they continued to live under restriction. Others were moved to “new villages” and other locations explicitly selected for their strategic value to the Indonesian military.

• In the same period displacement continued to be used as an integral part of the Indonesian counter-insurgency strategy. As the Resistance began to recover from its near destruction in the late 1970s, the military responded by displacing people suspected of having links with it, whether as members of a clandestine network or simply because they had family members in the bush. Beginning in 1980 thousands of people, the majority of whom were women and children, were transported to the barren island of Ataúro. They faced the consequences of inadequate provision of food and other essentials, at least until the ICRC was permitted to operate there in 1982. Fretilin attacks brought dire retribution from the Indonesian forces. Typically, as after the attacks on Mauchiga (Hatu Builico, Ainaro) in 1982 and Kraras (Viqueque, Viqueque) in 1983, this involved the displacement of entire villages, including to previously unsettled areas where again provision of essentials was minimal and the opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency slight.

• The whole period surrounding the Popular Consultation of 30 August 1999 was marked by displacements of different kinds. These ranged from flight from militia and TNI violence before and after the ballot to the organised evacuation of the population to West Timor, Indonesia that occurred after the result was announced. The violence of the militia groups, often working openly with their TNI sponsors, resulted in human rights violations on a scale not seen since the late 1970s. Detentions, torture and ill-treatment, killings, sexual violence and forced recruitment all reached new peaks in 1999, as did displacement. During 1999 displacement occurred both as spontaneous flight from militia violence and intimidation, and as the organised movement of people from their homes and other places where they had sought refuge. As in earlier years, displacement in all the variety of circumstances in which it occurred in 1999 had a severe impact on people’s ability to feed themselves, especially as the Indonesian authorities made a concerted effort to deny them humanitarian assistance.
3. As is evident from this short summary, the consequences of displacement in Timor-Leste were far-reaching. One of the most frequent ways in which armed conflicts around the world have disrupted the everyday lives of civilians is by causing them to be displaced. Even where it is voluntary, by uprooting civilians from the settings in which they have supported themselves, displacement commonly results in deprivation of various kinds, including hunger, disease and the loss of adequate shelter. Often displacement is in effect a form of arbitrary collective punishment, and as such is associated with violations of a range of human rights, civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural. All of these features of displacement were not just present in Timor-Leste, but in a very pronounced way.

4. The reason why mortality was far higher between 1975 and 1999 than would have been expected in normal peacetime conditions was the large number of deaths from hunger and illness that were directly related to displacement. The Commission has concluded that a minimum of 84,200 people died from displacement-related hunger and illness during the whole period (see Part 6: The Profile of Human Rights Violations).

5. In Timor-Leste displacement was also closely correlated with the whole range of human rights violations. It is noteworthy that during the years when deaths from hunger and illness were at their highest, namely 1975-79, displacement, killings and disappearances, and many non-fatal violations, including detention, torture and ill-treatment, also reached peaks. Indeed, over the whole period 1975-99 fluctuations in all of these phenomena tend to be closely correlated, strongly suggesting that they had a common underlying cause, most plausibly the intensity of Indonesian military operations. Events of 1999 provide a partial exception to this finding; although displacements and both fatal and non-fatal violations rose to very high levels in that year and deaths by deprivation did increase, the number of deaths from hunger and illness did not increase as sharply as the level of displacements and violations of all kinds did, perhaps because of the relatively brief timeframe of displacements in that year (see Part 6: The Profile of Human Rights Violations).

7.3.2 Definitions and methodology

6. Both “displacement” and “famine” are neutral terms in the sense that they may occur without human rights being violated. The Commission has concluded, however, that in the context of the conflicts in Timor-Leste, the nature of displacement and famine was almost always such that both were human rights violations in themselves and at the same time entailed a whole cluster of other violations.

Displacement

7. The Commission defines displacement as a situation where people leave the place where they live either under some form of compulsion or because they themselves have decided that circumstances are such that it would be dangerous not to move. Displacement can occur within a particular country (“internal displacement”) or to the territory of another country (“external displacement”). In Timor-Leste both “internal” and “external” displacement took place at different periods of the conflict. In this report, the Commission uses the term “internally displaced” for
displaced people who remained within the borders of Timor-Leste, and “refugees” for those who crossed the border to West Timor. ¹

8. By definition displacement always takes place unwillingly. It may occur because of the direct use of force or the threat of force against the people being displaced. It may also be spontaneous, or non-forcible, such as in a situation in which civilians flee from an approaching invading army.

9. Legally, displacement is forced when it occurs in a manner that is unlawful. Without reasonable evidence that a party to an armed conflict has acted unlawfully when displacing people, displacement cannot be described as forced. In accordance with international law, the Commission defines a “forced displacement” as displacement that is effected through the use of physical force or by the “threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power against...person or persons or another person or by taking advantage of a coercive environment”. Forced displacement within a country is referred to as “forcible transfer”; forced displacement to the territory of another country is “deportation”. ²

10. Forced displacement does not necessarily involve the actual use of force against the person or persons who are being displaced. Forced displacement would be considered to have occurred in a situation where, for example, civilians are ostensibly given a choice as to whether to board a truck that is going to move them from their homes, but in fact had reasonable grounds to fear death or violence if they refused.³ It does not encompass all situations where civilians flee to escape combat between an invading force and a defending army.

11. The use of force or the threat of force does not necessarily make displacement illegal. Force may be used to displace a population if those using force can justify their actions in terms of the safety of the people being displaced or military necessity. However, in the absence of these justifying conditions forced displacement may, if committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population, be a crime against humanity or may, if directed against people, such as civilians, who are protected under the Geneva Conventions, be a war crime.⁴

12. According to universal human rights standards, everyone has the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his or her residence.⁵ Restrictions on these rights are permitted only when it is necessary to protect national security, public order, public health or morals, or the rights of others. Any restrictions must be provided by law, proportionate to the protective function served, and must not be inconsistent with other human rights.⁶

13. The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provide that every person has the right to be protected against arbitrary displacement from his or her home, including in situations of armed conflict, except where the security of civilians or imperative military reasons so demand.⁷ Where people do suffer displacement, authorities must ensure their well-being, including access to food, water, shelter and medical services.⁸

¹ According to UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, 11 February 1998: “internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border.”

² Article 1 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951, defines a refugee as a person who based on “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.” In this chapter the term “refugee” is used to apply to those who were displaced to West Timor during the Indonesian occupation, whether or not they met that definition.

³ Thus forced displacement has been held to have occurred in circumstances where civilians “were not exercising a genuine choice to go, but reacted reflexively to a certainty that their survival depended on their flight”. [Prosecutor v Radislav Krstic, ICTY Case No IT-98-33-T, Trial Chamber Judgment, 2 August 2001, Paragraph 530].
14. Under international humanitarian law forced transfers of the civilian population are permitted by an occupying power only in cases where the evacuation of an area is necessary for the security of the population or for imperative military reasons. Even then civilians must not be moved outside the occupied territory except when it is impossible to avoid that happening. Where transfers are necessary the occupying power must ensure that proper accommodation is provided, that transfers occur in healthy and safe conditions, that members of the same family are not separated, and that evacuees are returned to their homes as soon as hostilities in their area have ceased.  

15. As already noted, in all other cases—that is where transfers are not strictly necessary—forced displacement of civilians within an occupied territory or to a place outside the occupied territory is prohibited by humanitarian law during an occupation. Violation of this rule constitutes a grave breach of Geneva Convention IV. In addition, where a forced displacement is carried out as part of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population it will constitute a crime against humanity.

16. In addition, other actions which may indirectly cause mass displacement of populations are also prohibited. Attacks on civilian homes, attacks that do not distinguish between civilians and combatants, and attacks that are designed to terrorise the civilian population are all prohibited. Violations of these rules by individuals may constitute war crimes.

Famine

17. Famine has been defined as widespread lack of access to sufficient food for survival, leading to excess death due to starvation and associated diseases. Like displacement, famine in itself does not constitute a violation of human rights. Famine may result from natural causes, such as drought, or from sheer poverty. By disrupting everyday life, armed conflict routinely causes food shortages. During an armed conflict civilians cannot get on with the everyday activities that allow them to make a living, such as producing food, earning an income or going to the market to provide for their own subsistence. In extreme cases, during wartime food shortages turn into famine.

18. However, it has been increasingly acknowledged that famines are in fact rarely simply the result of natural disasters and that human actors play a large part in creating them. Climatic extremes, an inhospitable environment and poverty have made hunger a persistent feature and extreme hunger a frequent feature of life in Timor-Leste. Famine, however, has been quite rare in Timor-Leste, and almost always associated with armed conflict.

19. The noted economist Amartya Sen has sought to distinguish the “phenomenon of ‘regular’ starvation” known to many East Timorese people from the “violent outbursts” that are famines. He suggests that “starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there not being enough food to eat.” He defines famine as a “particularly virulent manifestation of starvation causing widespread death”.

20. In Timor-Leste famine occurred between 1978 and 1980 during and after the intensive Indonesian military operation to finally gain control over the territory. Serious food shortages that caused deaths also occurred during the 1980s and in 1999. At all these times, and the Commission believes this Part demonstrates, it was not the case that food could not have been

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1 Article 5(d) Statute of the ICTY (referring to “deportation” but which has been interpreted so as to include both internal and external displacement; Prosecutor v Milomir Stakić, ICTY Case No IT-97-24-T, Trial Chamber Judgement, 31 July 2003, at para 679); Article 7(1)(d) Rome Statute for the ICC.

2 Famine was the main reason for the estimated 40,000 deaths that occurred during the Japanese occupation of Timor-Leste [see Part 3: The History of the Conflict].
made available to the people who needed it. Instead those people were positively denied access to food and to its sources.

21. It is in such contexts that famine is associated with violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. These violations go well beyond the denial of people’s rights to food and other essentials, although states have obligations to guarantee those rights. Under human rights law everyone has the right to adequate food and freedom from hunger. There should be food available of sufficient quality and quantity to satisfy people’s needs. In respecting these rights states must, for example, take measures to reduce malnutrition. A State must always ensure that everyone under its control has access to the minimum essential food. All persons also have a right to water and adequate housing.

22. These obligations can also be violated indirectly by, for example, pursuing policies that entail other kinds of violations that are manifestly incompatible with the right of people to food. They include the denial of freedom of movement, the violation of the right of individuals to live where they want, the denial of access to relief, the destruction of food sources, and ultimately the violation of the right to life.

23. Such violations may amount to crimes in international law. Thus in an international armed conflict mass starvation is a war crime if it is used as a weapon of war. Among the methods seen as examples of using mass starvation as a weapon of war are the deliberate obstruction of relief supplies and the destruction of food sources. Starvation may also constitute a crime against humanity if the deprivation of food is being used in a widespread and systematic fashion to exterminate a civilian population. During an occupation the occupying power has additional responsibilities to meet the needs of the local population. It must ensure that the population receives adequate food, water and medical treatment. This means importing resources or accepting aid when local supplies are inadequate.

Gathering information

24. The conflicts in Timor-Leste caused thousands of people to be displaced from their homes, in many cases more than once. Displacement, by its very nature, decreases victims’ ability to protect themselves or to meet basic needs. In Timor-Leste periods of displacement coincided with increased numbers of death by deprivation. This presented a challenge to the Commission. Many people who saw or experienced what happened during the years of displacement and famine have died. This meant that the Commission had to develop special initiatives to look into displacement, famine and death by deprivation.

1. The Commission collected 7,669 narrative statements from all 13 districts of Timor-Leste and in refugee camps in West Timor. 43.6% (3,344 out of 7,669) of deponents reported incidents where famine-related deaths or displacement occurred. Deponents in the Commission’s statement-taking process reported a total of 4,869 unique deaths by deprivation and 16,977 unique displacement events.
2. Thousands of people spoke about displacements and famine during Community Profile workshops. These workshops were facilitated by Commission staff to allow people collectively to document human rights violations and their impact on the community.
4. Commission staff conducted close to one hundred individual interviews with witnesses and survivors of displacement and famine in every district except Oecusse.
5. The Commission conducted a special investigation (the Death Toll Project) which included two major data-gathering exercises. Staff and volunteers conducted a census of marked and unmarked gravestones found in 1057 public cemeteries across the country. Staff also conducted a survey of 1,396 randomly selected households, asking them questions about displacements and deaths in their family during the conflict. Data gathered by the Commission were used to make statistical estimations on the death toll and patterns of displacement during the period of the conflict. The Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG) helped the Commission to collect and analyse these data (see Part 6: The Profile of Human Rights Violations).†

6. People and organisations inside and outside Timor-Leste with knowledge or direct experience of the phenomenon submitted documentation, materials and submissions on displacement and famine to the Commission.


7.3.3 Displacement and hunger caused by internal conflict (1974-1975)

Displacement due to political rivalries (1974-1975)

25. The Commission has received some reports of internal and external displacement between 1974 and 1975. These incidents are distinct from events immediately before and during the August 1975 internal armed conflict. While the exact timing of the events are often unclear, they do suggest that rivalry between the political groups was serious enough to cause people to flee their homes well before the outbreak of the internal armed conflict.

26. Before the outbreak of the internal armed conflict tensions had been rising throughout the territory. There were several elements to these growing tensions: competition between the parties for followers, often focused on the distribution of party cards and the setting up of branch offices; conflicts between traditional leaders and the leaders of the new parties; and more broadly the transformation of historically-rooted conflicts into inter-party conflicts. The civil war was then not just a sudden explosion of violence, but simply raised to new heights a spiral of violence that was already underway, one side-effect of which was flight and displacement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Name and Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HRVD 00922</td>
<td>Samalete, Taraso (Railaco Ermera)</td>
<td>In 1974, fearing intimidation from members of UDT, more than 70 persons ran into the forest. At the same time, Fretilin supporters killed seven members of UDT suspected of involvement in previous killing of Fretilin supporters. Consequently, another revenge killing of one person took place by UDT supporters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAVR Community Profile</td>
<td>Edi (Maubisse, Ainaro)</td>
<td>In 1974 and 1975 most people joined Fretilin, leaving UDT ashamed and angry. The two UDT leaders in Edi summoned forces from Ermera, Atsabe and Maubisse. They burned 1,872 houses, coffee holdings and food in storage, and killed animals, taking those still alive to Maubisse. After a four-day operation they set up a branch in Mauosahi Uslakatei and a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†In total, 1057 of 1631 public cemeteries were surveyed.

† The HRDAG (Human Rights Data Analysis Group) is a team of people who assist human rights projects around the world in the use of information management systems and scientific and statistical tools to gather and report large-scale human rights abuses. HRDAG is a project of the Benetech Initiative, a non-profit venture that provides technical and management assistance allowing HRDAG to fulfill its mission.
small one in Kamlai. Then they killed two Fretilin supporters. Fretilin supporters fled to Turiscai again. After four days Fretilin forces brought their supporters back from Turiscai. The two sides fought in Manelobas and the UDT forces fled to Maubisse.

| CAVR Community Profile | Aldeia Beco, Beidasi Village, (Fatululik, Covalima) | In October 1974 Fretilin leaders distributed party cards, as did Apodeti in November 1974. The two parties began to struggle to attract members. About 500 people from the aldeia of Beco ran off to Lakmanen in West Timor. |

27. The Commission heard evidence that an atmosphere of fear arose in other districts during this early period of political party formation, causing displacement.  

Displacement caused by the internal conflict

28. The displacements that occurred as a result of the armed conflict between the two main political parties, UDT and Fretilin, in August to September 1975, was more widespread and lasted longer. Other parties, especially Apodeti, were embroiled in this armed conflict. Opposing party supporters, their families and ordinary people sought safety from the violence which erupted throughout the country. Party supporters, sometimes entire villages, fled in fear for their lives. In Dili the political violence led to some displacement and food shortages as the population fled the fighting, as recorded in one CAVR Community Profile:

*In 1975 the situation became heated. People began to throw stones at each other, to fight each other using spears and machetes. Some people dug cellars as a place to hide...Everyone left their homes and hid in neighbouring areas. Some fled to hide in caves for three months. The food situation was difficult, and many grew hungry, but nobody died of starvation.*

29. The following table shows some examples of testimony collected by the Commission about civil war-related displacement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Name and Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAVR Community Profile</td>
<td>Maulau (Maubisse, Ainaro)</td>
<td>On August 7 and 14 1975, Fretilin forces from Liquioe, Turiscai and Manumera launched a three-pronged attack through Maleria, Lumluli and Usululu, killing many people and burning 675 houses in the three aldeias. They also killed many animals and took others to Liquioe. The UDT people fled to Maubisse leaving the old and the children in Maulau. In another attack one week later, on 14 August, Fretilin forces from Turiscai burned eight houses in Lakamalikau.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRVD 09078</td>
<td>Daniel Pereira Pires, Leubuti, Foholau (Turiscai, Manufahi)</td>
<td>In September 1975, because of an attack by Fretilin supporters, villagers from the aldeia of Leobuti, Foholau (Turiscai), mostly Apodeti supporters, fled to safety in the surrounding forest area. At least three people were captured and killed by Fretilin supporters. Some survivors were forced to relocate to Turiscai where they worked in the fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRVD 00163</td>
<td>Celestina da Costa Oliveira Wedauberek, Same, Manufahi</td>
<td>Soon after the conflict between UDT and Fretilin broke out on 11 August 1975, most of the people of Letefoho (Same, Manufahi) fled into the mountains, fearing further violence. They were afraid of being captured by UDT supporters, after the killing of a group of Fretilin activists by UDT in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CAVR Community Profile | Asumanu, Liquiça
---|---
On 13 August 1975 UDT raised its flag in Bilamar, in the aldeia of Caicasico and then burned houses and killed six people in the aldeia of Siskoolema and of Hatumatilu. Some of the population ran off to Base 1 in Leorema and others fled to Base 2 in the Loes area (Maubara, Liquiça), while a small number fled to the forest.

30. According to ICRC estimates, as many as 50% of the population may have been displaced as a result of the internal armed conflict.30 With the cessation of hostilities across most of the territory by mid-September 1975, most internally displaced people were able to begin returning to their homes. However a large number of the defeated UDT leaders and fighters fled to the border area, eventually crossing over into West Timor (Indonesia). Some members of the parties allied with UDT and Apodeti supporters also sought refuge in West Timor. Particularly in the border districts of Covalima and Bobonaro, UDT and Apodeti leaders forced the uncommitted and Fretilin supporters to join the flight.

The flight to West Timor

31. Of the UDT and Apodeti supporters who fled into West Timor after the Fretilin armed insurrection in August 1975, some were civilians who went to West Timor out of genuine fear for their safety. They believed that they were likely to be targets of Fretilin violence.

32. Some UDT supporters crossed the border for military training and to join forces with the Indonesian military to continue to fight against Fretilin. The Commission does not consider these cases to be displacement, as they involve willing combatants and not civilians. Often, however, the two groups were intermingled and difficult to distinguish.

33. In collective testimonies of communities in the district of Covalima, through the Commission’s Community Profile discussions in Holpilat, Lela (Maukatar, Covalima), Belulik Kraik (Fatumean, Covalima), and Aitoun, Beidasi (Fatululik, Covalima), a clear picture emerged of supporters of Apodeti and UDT fleeing across the border in late 1975 out of fear for their lives.31

34. Paulo de Fatima Martins, in an interview by UN police, stated that he and a group of 900 people - including women and children - fled first from Hatulia (Ermera) to Tatae Uhu (Lisapat, Hatulia) and then on to Cailaco, Purugua in Maliana (Bobonaro) in mid-September, before reaching Haekesak near Atambua in West Timor on 16 September.31

35. The Commission heard testimony from a former UDT leader in Covalima, Emiliano Teixeira (Rui) Lopes, and others who recounted that they fled to West Timor with some 400 civilians. They stayed at make-shift refugee camps in Alas (Betun, West Timor, Indonesia) for a few days, and were moved to Atambua to join other refugees from Timor-Leste. Emiliano (Rui) Lopes told the Commission:

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CAVR Community Profile Holpilat, Lela (Maukatar, Covalima) recounts that Apodeti supporters sought refuge in Lambemanas (Belu, West Timor), 18 February 2003; CAVR Community Profile Belulik Kraik (Fatumean, Covalima) describes how the placement of Falintil troops on the border after the armed insurrection led opposition party leaders and their supporters to flee to West Timor, 28 July 2003; CAVR Community Profile Aitoun, Beidasi, Fatululik Sub-district, Covalima District records that ten families moved to Lamaken (Belu, West Timor) as early as 1974. Later, in October 1975, UDT and Apodeti supporters evacuated to West Timor, 17 October 2002.
In Suai we didn’t force people to go to Indonesia. We knew it was also hard in Indonesia. Only those of us who were involved went. But a number of people who fled also followed us. Not many. But in Dili and Ermera, they took everybody. Those who supported UDT all fled.  

36. The following table lists some of the communities living near the border who, fearing the inter-party violence, fled to West Timor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAVR Community Profiles</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Odomau (Maliana, Bobonaro)</td>
<td>On 2 September 1975 the people of the village ran in all directions, up into the mountains and into Builalo (West Timor). The people of Odomau were refugees in West Timor for about nine months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldeia Aitoun, Beidasi Village (Fatululik, Covalima)</td>
<td>Fretilin arrived in the aldeia of Aitoun, with supporters from Fatululik. About ten families fled to Lamaknan in West Timor because of intimidation and threats from Fretilin supporters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lela Village (Maukatar, Covalima)</td>
<td>On 20 November 1975, about 650 people crossed the border with UDT leader, with Emiliano Teixeira Lopes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopilat Village (Maukatar, Covalima)</td>
<td>After Fretilin launched the armed insurrection on 20 August 20 1975, four families who supported Apodeti ran to Lamaknan in West Timor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritabou Village (Maliana, Bobonaro)</td>
<td>Fretilin supporters were detained by UDT members on 11 August 1975. On 2 September 1975, villagers heard the sound of gunfire and ran to Haekesak, Wedomo and Atambua in West Timor. After nine days some moved back to Batugade then, fearing attacks from the sea, moved to Mota Ain and Atambua, West Timor. Conditions were difficult in the camps, with disease and little access to clean water. The ICRC eventually began providing emergency assistance to the camps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holsa Village (Maliana, Bobonaro)</td>
<td>The men were recruited to attack Fretilin in Dili, but then UDT lost. When the men returned to Maliana, people ran in all directions, many without taking provisions. Some ran to the mountains, others to Builalo in West Timor. Some Fretilin supporters who joined the exodus to West Timor were threatened and then killed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo Village (Maliana, Bobonaro)</td>
<td>On 5 September 1975, hearing the sound of gunfire, the people of Halimesak fled across the river to Baulalulu in West Timor. They made make-shift houses and lived on food gathered from the forest. Initially some families remained in Memo, but by the end of the month all had joined the 5,000 to 10,000 refugees already gathered in Baulalulu. Many died from diarrhoea and malaria and there were serious food shortages during this time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raifun Village (Maliana, Bobonaro)</td>
<td>About 500 people ran to the mountains and others to Haekesak in West Timor. In Haekesak, they lived in tents and received food, clothes and money, but disease was rife and many died. They stayed in Haekesak for one year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaviquinia Village (Maubara, Liquíça)</td>
<td>When Fretilin retaliated, UDT leaders like João Carrascalão and Raja Gaspar Nunes fled to Batugade in fishing boats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leimea Sorin Balu Village (Hatolia, Ermera)</td>
<td>Some people surrendered, others ran with UDT leaders to Atambua. About 120 people became refugees in Haekesak in West Timor for one year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forcible transfer to West Timor

37. Not everyone in refugee camps in West Timor or being trained by ABRI for operations in Timor-Leste had fled willingly. Some people reported being forced across the border by UDT leaders.

38. The Commission heard statements from persons who were forcibly brought across the border and, in some instances, recruited as TBOs, Hansips or Partisan forces. For example,
Francisco da Silva Araújo from Ermera gave evidence to the Commission about the forced deportation to Atambua through Hakesak by members of UDT of approximately 1,000 people. The group crossed the border on 2 September, and did not return to Ermera until June 1976.42

39. Benvinda dos Santos from Memo (Maliana, Bobonaro) was one of several people who told the Commission of being forced by F36, the East Timorese liurai of Memo and a local UDT leader, to flee to Atambua in 1975, because he said there was going to be a huge upheaval between the UDT and FretiLlin parties. When they arrived in Atambua her husband, Malibere, was captured by a Hansip member F39 who took him to Sumur where he, with Clementino and Americo, were subsequently stabbed to death.43

40. Francisca Argentina, also from Memo, claimed that she was a member of FretiLlin but was nevertheless forced to flee to West Timor by UDT party leaders, including F36. She told the Commission she and her family were refugees in West Timor for about one year, during which her brother died from lack of adequate food.44

41. The people of the village of Saburai (Maliana, Bobonaro) told the Commission that it was not just FretiLlin supporters who were forced over the border:

On 30 August 1975 fighting between UDT and FretiLlin supporters began. Soldiers from the 5th Cavalry Squadron in Bobonaro came to Maliana. Supporters of UDT and Apodeti, were forced by F40, an East Timorese member of Apodeti and the liurai, F36, to run to West Timor. About 500 people from the aldeia of Mesage were refugees in Tahon (West Timor) for one year.

Refugee numbers in West Timor

42. The Commission was unable to determine the exact number of refugees in West Timor in 1975. However, a variety of East Timorese sources who had been in the camps in West Timor agree that the figure of 40,000 given by the Indonesian authorities was a gross overestimate. João Carrascalão told the Commission:

[There were] never more than 10,000 (refugees). At the time I complained very strongly to the Indonesians because they were using the figure of 40,000 people and they were receiving aid for 40,000 people. (But) the Timorese did not get anything. They [the Indonesian authorities] took advantage of the situation.45

43. Two priests, Father Francisco Fernandes† and Father Apolinario Guterres, both of whom had joined the exodus to West Timor in August to September 1975 and were involved in the work of the East Timor Refugee Committee in Atambua during this period, put the number of refugees at "roughly 20,000".46

44. One of the leaders of the KOTA party, José Martins, "defected" from the pro-integration cause while in Rome in 1976. From Rome he wrote a letter to the UN Secretary-General, Kurt

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† CAVR Community Profile Saburai Village (Maliana, Bobonaro). Other statements received by the Commission in which F36 is alleged to have forced people to cross into West Timor at this time include HRVD Statements 02487, 02449, 02491, 02462 and 02446. F36 became district administrator of Bobonaro (bupati) from 1992 to 1999. In 1999 he played a pivotal role in the creation and support of the militia groups, of which there were at least nine in his district [see OCHR Submission, pp.114 and 142-3].

† Father Francisco Fernandes passed away in Maucau, China on 30 August 2005. He was buried in Laclo, Manatuto District on 11 September 2005.
Waldheim, dated 29 April 1976 in which he also said that the refugees numbered no more than 20,000. Like João Carrascalão, he claimed that the figure of 40,000 cited by the Indonesians was being used “as a political weapon against Frelimo” and “a trick to get funds and aid from the International Red Cross and foreign governments”. Tomás Gonçalves of Apodeti, who was also in West Timor at the time, told the Commission that the refugees numbered no more than 25,000-30,000. Even Francisco Lopes da Cruz, then the vice chairman of the Indonesian-installed Provisional Government of East Timor, said in March 1976 that no more than 30,000 refugees had fled Timor-Leste as a result of the civil war.

45. The international agencies operating in West Timor, however, accepted the official Indonesian figures. On 16 September 1975, an ICRC report estimated the number of refugees at between 25,000 and 50,000. The ICRC delegate, Michel Testuz, reported visiting 10,000 refugees in the camp in Haekesak and 6,000 in Bauilalu on 29 September 1975. He further reported that Indonesian border immigration claimed to have counted 33,000 crossing the border by 16 September 1975 and 2,000 to 3,000 coming across during fighting in Batugade on 24 September 1975. Using these data Testuz concluded that the “total number is now 40,000 and could increase to 50,000”. A figure of 40,000 refugees was also used in a US Catholic Relief Services (CRS) report describing humanitarian assistance to West Timor in November 1975.

Conditions and humanitarian assistance in West Timor

46. Once international relief programmes were established for the refugees, reports suggest that their basic needs were for a time adequately met. However, several sources suggest that conditions in the camps later deteriorated.

47. Describing the situation in October 1975, the ICRC delegate, Michel Testuz, said that the camps were temporary but well-provisioned. Most refugees were sheltered in schools that had been closed by the Indonesian authorities to accommodate them. Although local pressure to re-open the schools and relocate the refugees was mounting, he noted that the “government makes no move or plan for relocation and gives the impression that it could all be over tomorrow and refugees safely home the next day”. The ICRC delegate further commented that the Indonesian Red Cross was caring adequately for the refugees there, providing rice rations and 25 US cents per day for other necessities. The refugees looked “well fed and healthy”. This assessment was confirmed by former refugees in the camp who were interviewed by the Commission. They said that the services provided by the local provincial government and the Indonesian Red Cross included the provision of semi-permanent housing with adequate sanitation. Other than meeting basic daily needs, the Indonesian government also conducted social activities such as Indonesian language lessons.

48. However, former inmates of the camps said that after an initial period in which they were well-treated, the Indonesian attitude to them changed. Emiliano (Rui) Lopes told the Commission:

> Many people fled abroad, because they didn’t like the military ethos. For example a Hansip could also order us around, hit us. Everyone saw this and many left...There were people who died from illness, but no one died of starvation. I’m speaking honestly. But the mental pressure was very intense...We felt completely oppressed. There was not much we could do. If someone started hitting we’d just watch and stay silent. Where was our pride? Things like this made the Carrascalão family and other families flee the country.
49. In his letter to UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, José Martins complained that the refugees had “found only maltreatment and misery”:

The refugees were either forced to take military training and fight against Fretilin or to work without pay for the Indonesians. Their belongings were confiscated, such as money, jewellery and so on. 57

50. In their testimony to the Decolonisation Committee in October 1979 Fr Fransisco Fernandes and Fr Apolinario Guterres gave a detailed account of the change in the Indonesian attitude to the refugees. They said that it happened in March 1976 when the Indonesian authorities asked the two priests to ensure that all the refugees attend a rally at which the Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, would be present. The refugees were to carry Indonesian flags and call for integration. After only 2,000 of the 20,000 refugees attended the rally their food supplies were reduced and then completely cut off. Their only options were to sell their belongings at very low prices, to “do hard labour for criminally low wages” or to join the military. 58

51. Some former refugees confirmed that it was the lack of adequate food that forced them to join the military in West Timor. In his statement to the Commission, Emiliano (Rui) Lopes said that initially the refugees in the camps in West Timor did not experience any shortages. However, the amount of aid received by the refugees began to diminish once all international aid was distributed by Indonesian government officials. According to him, some young men joined the Partisans in order to receive rations:

One of the reasons I took up arms on the border was that there was no more food to eat, and I had to do this to receive food supplies. Because every donation from the international NGOs was given through the Indonesian government. In the beginning they [Indonesia] provided enough aid, but as time passed it began to decrease. I had to take up arms to get more food to eat, otherwise we would have faced a difficult situation. 59

52. Odete dos Santos from Memo (Maliana, Bobonaro) told the Commission about the recruitment as TBOs (tenaga bantuan operasi, TBOs) of two forcibly displaced members of her family, and its consequences. In 1975 her family was forcibly displaced to Atambua by F36. In Atambua two of her family members, Lesu Bere and Alfredo Lopes, were forced to become TBOs. They were made to go on military operations in Timor-Leste. According to Odete, Lesu Bere was killed by Indonesian soldiers in Atsabe, and Alfredo Lopes in Maliana. 60

Food shortages and humanitarian assistance in Timor-Leste

53. The conditions of those who fled the violence but stayed within the borders of Timor-Leste are difficult to assess. Many people fled to remote locations and were isolated from any outsiders who could have delivered aid or acted as impartial observers.

54. ICRC correspondence confirms that, in addition to the loss of access to their own crops, isolation was a major reason why those who were displaced internally faced food insecurity. The ICRC delegate noted that the much of the population had already been living a marginal existence. 61 As previously noted, he estimated that 50% of the population was displaced due to the conflict. 62 He insisted, however, that there was no “starvation” following the civil war, but rather “food stress”. The ICRC was given free access by Fretilin, which was aware that the food situation was likely to become critical if shipments were not allowed to land and replenish supplies.
55. The ICRC confined its food distribution activities to Dili and the Ermera-Maubara-Dili triangle. The ICRC delegate admitted that this meant that its distribution was not determined as much by need - although the areas where it did distribute food were ones that had suffered violence and displacement - as by its desire to avoid the appearance of political partiality. The ICRC declined to deliver food to the Fretilin-controlled areas on the grounds that such aid would be “political”.63 Fretilin handled distribution to the central part of the island, using supplies from the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA).64 However, the ICRC food deliveries did not start until late November and had thus barely begun when it was forced to pull out of Timor-Leste in early December, just before the full-scale Indonesian invasion.

Hunger and deaths

56. Despite this humanitarian assistance, the Commission did receive reports of hunger and deaths due to lack of food and medicine. Displaced people in the interior highlands, in particular, had poor access to outside assistance. Below are some examples of testimonies received by the Commission.

57. Veronica dos Santos of Laclo (Manatuto) told the Commission how in 1975 her family fled from Apodeti supporters, and hid in the Zona Modok Forest. She listed five members of her family who died from lack of food and medical care:

   In our hiding place I lost several members of my family - João da Costa, José Luis dos Santos, Domingas dos Santos, Carlos do Rosario Cabral, Maria de Fatima Canossa and Filomeno Cabral - due to lack of food and medicine.65

58. The Commission heard of a case in Soibada (Manatuto) when conflict between political parties drove people to the forest. Under orders from Fretilin, people moved to a place called Wetirak, Mood (Natarbora, Manatuto).66

59. José Nunes de Andrade recalled that he was attacked by UDT members in his village of Mahakidan (Alas, Manufahi) in 1975, while he and four of his friends were attempting to raise the Fretilin flag. The five fled to Wederok, and he was later joined by other members of his family. Two members of his family died from lack of food and illness while they were in Wederok.67

60. Some killings took place when people went searching for food. The Commission heard of cases where inter-party conflict resulted in people being internally displaced, and in some cases killed by Fretilin forces68

61. The reports of starvation during this period are few. The ICRC’s overall assessment was that starvation and famine-related deaths were not a widespread phenomenon before the Indonesian invasion. As the violence quickly subsided (Fretilin gained control of the entire country in a matter of weeks), most of those who were internally displaced were in hiding for a month at most. By mid-September 1975, most of them had returned home and were planting food crops again.69
7.3.4 Displacement and famine during the Indonesian occupation
(1975-1979)

Invasion, displacement and evacuation 1975-1977

62. The full-scale Indonesian invasion of Timor-Leste on 7 December 1975 marked the beginning of the displacement of the population of Timor-Leste on a massive scale. The invasion of Dili itself on that day caused many to flee to the countryside, following those who had left earlier in anticipation of an attack. Such movements were repeated outside Dili, both in response to the actual presence of Indonesian forces and in the expectation that their arrival was imminent.

63. Some evacuations were spontaneous, others were organised by the Freti-led resistance. In a complex mixture of circumstances, many East Timorese who left their homes then found themselves caught between a fear of life under harsh Indonesian military rule and a resistance determined to keep them out of Indonesian control. The motivation of the Resistance here appears to have been a combination of a commitment to support and protect the people, to meet the Resistance’s own security needs in a time of war, a desire to retain control of the bulk of the population in order to launch its revolutionary social programme, and as evidence of the extent of its political support.

64. The numbers of displaced people are impossible to calculate for any point in the first two years of the occupation, but they certainly increased over that time. The eventual movement of something like 300,000 people into Indonesian-controlled centres between 1978 and 1979 is the best indicator of to the massive scale of the displacement which began in late 1975.

Evacuation and flight after the full-scale invasion

65. The Indonesian invasion of Dili on 7 December 1975 found many people unprepared, even though it was expected. The situation was chaotic as people fled in all directions. Many became separated from their immediate family members. Benvinda Lopes told the Commission:

On 7 December 1975 I was in Quintal Boot. When the Indonesian troops invaded they came straight to our house and shot my brothers Raul and Kaimauk in front of me…The residents of Quintal Boot had all fled to the hills. My cousin and I chose to stay in the house. But as the situation became more chaotic both of us fled to Tereiro, and then [we] moved again to the Lahane Hospital. We stayed in Lahane for two days. We were very hungry because we did not have anything to eat. Finally the two of us returned to our house to get some rice and other food. The rest of my family was scattered…I don’t know where they ran to.70

66. As news of the invasion reached other parts of the territory and Indonesian forces began to advance beyond Dili, many more people fled in fear. In Baucau the arrival of Indonesian soldiers came only days after the invasion of Dili. Members of the community of Uailili (Baucau Town, Baucau) recounted to the Commission:
On 9 December 1975 Indonesia troops entered Baucau. They distributed posters written in Tetum which said among others: “Ami sei ba passa Natal iha Baucau to’o Tutuala” (We will celebrate Christmas from Baucau to Tutuala) A day later, the people of Uailili [about 10km from the centre of Baucau] run scattered. Some ran into the forest, while others hid [in] the coconut grove near our house until the Indonesian troops came.71

67. For some communities, the news of the Indonesian invasion in Dili was enough for them to evacuate their homes to seek safety in the mountains. Manuel Carceres da Costa told the Commission of the community response in Laclo (Manatuto):

After the Indonesian military invaded Dili on 7 December 1975, but before Christmas, there were people from Dili who fled returning to Laclo. They told us: “The Indonesian military have entered Dili and killed many people. They have shot people dead and used tanks to take everything the people owned.” We heard this and thought: “Rather than…stay here and let the enemy destroy us, it is better…to flee to the forests.” We also hoped that assistance from the outside world would come quickly. 72

68. In other places Fretilin had made preparations for the evacuation of the population in the months leading up to the invasion and had evacuated villages well before the arrival of Indonesian forces in the area. This level of organisation seems to have been most common in the eastern districts of Baucau and Lautém, for example in the areas of Tutuala, Iliomar, Uaitame, Alawa Kraik and Ossuhuna.

69. Some people from the town of Ermera ran to the mountains in early 1976, when they heard that Indonesian troops had entered Letefoho from Bobonaro. Francisco Bernadino Soares told the Commission:

We heard the sound of planes bombing the Letefoho area for one whole day. The situation in Ermera was no longer under control. The Resistance army tried to stop Indonesian soldiers in Dauhati, to prevent them from entering Ermera. We evacuated to Mau-Ubu, which is our traditional land where we have our gardens and uma lulik [ancestral home]. We fled because we heard that the Indonesians had entered Letefoho and were killing people randomly. We never imagined that we would face the disaster of people starving to death. For two years we lived quite well. When we left Ermera, there were 11 of us, plus another 20 family members who lived in Mau-Ubu. In total we were more than 30 people. When we returned to Ermera there were only three of us left. My wife and my family all died in the forest from sickness and hunger. 73

70. In other areas people spoke of being able to remain in their villages in the interior until the Indonesian military approached in late 1976 or 1977.74
Capture or surrender

71. Some communities were captured before they had a chance to flee. Others chose to stay behind and take their chances with the invading Indonesian soldiers.

72. In Suai (Covalima) some people did not evacuate to the hills when the Indonesian army attacked. They hid in their gardens and then surrendered.

73. Similarly, some people in Same (Manufahi) who did not follow the Fretilin leadership surrendered immediately to the Indonesian armed forces when they entered the town in June 1976.

74. When the Indonesian forces attacked the village of Cioleta Leotelo (Hatulia, Ermera) in May 1976, about 200 people were unable to escape because the army blockaded the area. At first these people were detained in Cioleta Leotelo Village itself, then they were forced to move to Letefoho (Ermera).

Fretilin internal divisions on policy towards civilians

75. Not long after the invasion the Fretilin leadership faced serious disagreement over the implications of its policy towards civilians that was confirmed at the Central Committee’s meeting at Soibada in May 1976. For a variety of reasons including political, military, humanitarian and religious reasons the dissidents challenged the strategy of creating zonas libertadas where the civilian population could simultaneously support the armed struggle and undergo the political transformation needed to achieve Fretilin’s revolutionary goals. They preferred to pursue a more purely military strategy, which would not rely on a civilian support base and thus would allow civilians to come down from the mountains and surrender. This challenge came from a number of sources, including professional soldiers, who had served in the Portuguese colonial army, traditional leaders and some within the Fretilin leadership itself. The most notable early advocate of these dissenting views was Aquilis Freitas, a former sergeant in the Portuguese army and a traditional leader from Quelicai (Baucau), who had been appointed deputy commander of the Centro Leste Sector. Aquilis Freitas was ultimately arrested on the orders of the Fretilin leadership with several of his followers and executed (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances). However, support for such views was widespread and persistent.

76. Community leaders told the commission about the impact of this violent conflict on the villages of the sub-district of Iliomar in Lautém in 1976. They remembered that when the political commissar for the Ponta Leste Sector, Juvenal Inácio (Sera Key) and Adjunto Fernando Txay had advocated the party line that civilians should evacuate to the mountains with Fretilin, Francisco Hornay had resisted them. Like his friend, Aquilis Freitas, Francisco Hornay was a former sergeant in the Portuguese colonial army who had joined Falintil. The conflict unleashed violence on both sides which resulted in the execution of Francisco Hornay and 14 of his followers, and the imprisonment and torture of many others.

Responsibilities of parties to the conflict

77. The Geneva Conventions clearly state that parties to a conflict must guarantee basic needs for the survival of civilians caught up in the conflict.\(^1\)

78. The Commission received overwhelming evidence that the Indonesian armed forces gave absolute priority to security considerations, while paying scant attention to the protection

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\(^1\) See Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in a time of war, Geneva, 12 August 1949, for a full outline of the parties’ obligations.
and well-being of civilians. In so doing, Indonesia failed to fulfill its obligations to protect civilian life.

79. Iliomar is one example. In 1975 Fernando Amaral was the head of the village of Faut, on the edge of the town of Iliomar (Iliomar, Lautém). He told the Commission:

The Indonesian invaders first entered Lospalos in [February] 1976. In Iliomar we did not experience anything [of the war] until 9 February 1977, when we started to hear mortar fire and the sound of cannons from ships. We became frightened and worried and...we evacuated to the forest around Faut and to other places near our houses. We hid for several months in Faut then moved to Luro. We moved into the forest because we were afraid of the Indonesian military. No one forced us.76

80. Often the local Fretilin leadership organised the evacuation in order to take people away from danger. These evacuations were part of Fretilin’s policy to prepare the population for an organised national resistance. In Baucau, for example, Fretilin moved many people to the slopes of Mount Matebian early in February 1976. This was nearly two months after the Indonesian armed forces had entered Baucau. Mário (Marito) Nicolau dos Reis was a Fretilin leader in Baucau at the time of the invasion. He recounted to the Commission the internal Fretilin debate on whether to evacuate civilians:

[In 1975] there was a discussion among members of the Fretilin Central Committee (CCF). Some said, “if possible, we should follow the example of other countries: children and the elderly shouldn’t have to go to the forest, we must pay attention to [their] economic and health needs. We don’t have the means to support everyone”. But others said: “If we don’t prepare the people politically, morally and mentally, then we will not be able to maintain our legitimacy and fulfill our duty as the main party in Timor.” Fretilin decided that everyone [must] evacuate. After everything was prepared, then they could come down [to surrender]. That was why Fretilin had to force, excuse me for using the word “force”, everyone to flee to the mountains.78

81. When the people of Defawasi (Bagua, Baucau) began to evacuate in the direction of Mount Matebian in September 1976, it was on the orders of Fretilin. In October 2003 they recalled to the Commission:

It was not too repressive. It was still required for our safety and also to demonstrate our loyalty to the armed front and the Fretilin Central Committee.80

82. The Commission was also told of instances where the evacuation was repressive. The people of Caisido (Baucau, Baucau) recalled their experience:
Between February and March 1976 Fretilin started to force the people to evacuate, first to Uai-Ae and Bundura, then to Hae-Osso, Vemasse. While the evacuees were in Hae-Osso Fretilin forces killed two people, Francisco Belo and Eduardo Belo, because they suspected them or out of revenge. Then they killed five Apodeti sympathisers. Then Fretilin forced the people to evacuate to Lobito. 81

83. Often people did not have an opportunity to flee, or they chose not to. This was most common in towns.

84. The communities of Bidau Santana and Meti-Aut in Cristo Rei, Dili recalled to the Commission:

On 7 December the Indonesian paratroops landed in Bidau Santana and Meti-Aut, and all over Dili. We scattered in fear. Some stayed in their houses, some fled to the mountains and never returned. Chiquito Mau-Lohi [of Apodeti] persuaded people not to go to the forest, saying that if they all died there “Who will take responsibility in the future”?82

85. In Buruma, on the eastern edge of the town of Baucau, some people, and especially those who had been active in Fretilin, tried to flee after Indonesian tanks entered Baucau on 10 December. Several of them were captured. One of those who was captured, a Fretilin activist called Manuel Fernandes, was killed on 18 December. For those who stayed in Buruma life was difficult. In January 1976 Battalion 330 was posted in the village and two people suspected of having contact with Fretilin were killed by the Indonesian military. The people of Buruma were concentrated in the centre of the village and restrictions were placed on their movement outside that area.83

86. Indonesian troops attacked the village of Samara (Hatulia, Ermera) on 24 April 1976. Fretilin troops attempted to defend the village but the Indonesians overpowered them and took 500 civilian villagers to the district capital Ermera. In Ermera, the Samara villagers were not allowed to move outside the town and suffered from severe hunger.84

87. The community of the sub-district of Hatu-Udo (Ainaro) told the Commision their difficult experience upon surrender in early 1976. In 1975 Hatu-Udo had about 3,000 inhabitants, but the people had only about 40 guns to defend themselves. The leaders of Hatu-Udo held a meeting on 28 February 1976, and decided to surrender without resistance to the Indonesian armed forces that day. But the decision to surrender also resulted in hardship. At first, they had sufficient food, but after some time the people began to suffer from hunger. The Indonesian battalion that took the town, Battalion 312, together with Hansip and Apodeti party members had killed the local livestock and burned some of the crops. People were not permitted to leave the village to farm. The Indonesian armed forces also brought many more people to Hatu-Udo who had surrendered from other places. These people also needed food, placing further strain on the already overstretched supplies.85

Displacement, hunger and death in Bobonaro

88. In an interview with Commission staff, Sister Consuela Martinez of the Carmelite Order told of her experience of early surrender in Bobonaro to Indonesian forces. 86 Restricted in their movements, food shortages became a constant problem for all the population there over the following three years. Sister Consuela’s account is especially striking as it recalls the terrible conditions that the surrendering civilian population were held in by the Indonesian authorities.
These conditions led to hunger and illness and a significant number of deaths, especially among children. Such testimony demonstrates the pattern of neglect toward surrendering civilians, which cost an immense number of lives in the later 1970s, which was already established in the early period after the invasion (see Box: Bobonaro surrenders early, below).
Bobonaro surrenders early

Sister Consuela Martinez of the Carmelite Order gave a detailed interview to the Commision about the Indonesian military attacks of 1975 in the border district of Bobonaro, which led to mass displacement. She spoke of the difficulties of living in the mountains and of the terrible conditions upon surrender to the Indonesian military which led to large-scale loss of life among the civilian population. This brief study is based on the interview with Sr Consuela.

Sister Consuela was living in the town of Bobonaro with three other nuns in August 1975 when she witnessed Indonesian military airplanes bomb the town. This was around the time of the UDT “attempted coup” in Dili. She heard that planes were also bombing the towns of Maliana and Suai. Every day the planes dropped bombs. Many people died. She said that when the people heard the planes coming to drop the bombs, they ran to hide.

Sister Consuela said that a child of a catechist she knew was killed by a bomb, which exploded near to her. She remembers that in the Bobonaro market people were hit by flying debris as a result of one attack. She recalled thinking thought at the time that the bombs were not being directed at houses in the town but rather at the fields. Houses close to these areas were completely destroyed. The nuns and all the people were terrified. She tried to make a safe place in the kitchen with mattresses.

In December 1975 when the Indonesian soldiers landed in Dili, the people fled to the hills at Ai Metan. The four nuns went with them together with the local East Timorese priest, Fr António Maia. People were able to bring some food and, with what they could find, all survived. "We ate only bananas or peanuts every day. If there was some corn then they ate that. God blessed us, so no one was sick," she said.

Sister Consuela said that there was no community decision to flee, it was just spontaneous. There were about 8,000 people in Ai Metan—not just from the immediate vicinity of the town of Bobonaro, but from places such as Hauba (Maliana, Bobonaro) and Cailaco (Atabae, Bobonaro) in other sub-districts of Bobonaro District and from Marobo in Ralac (Ermera.) In the hills they lived out in the open, exposed to the cold. They built simple shelters out of grass and other materials they could find. There was no organisation or community decision-making process. People were generally grouped in families. About 300 people attached themselves to the four nuns and the priest, thinking perhaps they would be safer in their company.

About 15 members of Falintil were hiding with the people, including Manuel Barro, the son of the liurai of Hauba (who was later killed in Maliana). His father, the liurai, forbade them from carrying weapons.

On the morning of 2 February 1976, an unarmed Indonesian soldier, with an East Timorese Partisan from Atabae, came to meet them in the hills. He told them that if they surrendered they would not be bombed and they would be treated well. A group of people, including three of the nuns and the priest, were invited to walk to the foothills to discuss surrender. However all the people who were with the nuns went with them to the meeting. The priest spoke with the soldiers, as he was the only one who could speak some English. The meeting concluded at 5.00pm but they were not permitted to return that evening. They spent that night sheltering under the trees without food and returned the following morning. The next day, 3 February 1976, all 8,000 people collected their belongings and walked to Bobonaro, a journey of about three hours.

At the time they surrendered, one East Timorese Partisan recognised that there were members of Falintil among them. Another Partisan assaulted the son of the liurai. However, the Indonesian commander took action against this Partisan because he thought that people would be too afraid to surrender to the Indonesian military if they thought this could happen to them.
Life in Indonesian-occupied Bobonaro

When the group surrendered the soldiers did not given them any food. Most people were able to carry some food with them from the mountains. Later groups that surrendered were given a bowl of white rice with salt by the Indonesian soldiers at the time of surrender.

The people had to live in the town of Bobonaro and could not go beyond a distance of one kilometre from its centre. Some people lived in houses in the town, which were often not their own. They also stayed at the school, the church, the large house of the former Portuguese administrator, where the nuns had their clinic, and in other buildings where they could find shelter. Within the town perimeter itself there was an Indonesian police post, a military command post (Koramil) and a house where the commanders and Kopassandha (Special Forces) troops lived. On the roads out of town there were six or seven military posts. In the open field in front of the church the Indonesian soldiers set up seven portable mortar launchers, and in another area there was a large mounted artillery piece which could launch 36 missiles at one time.

Sister Consuela said the firing of the mortars from the churchyard was so loud that it would break the windows and lamps in the church. The Indonesian soldiers fired their artillery shells in all directions, and Falintil fired back.

If they wanted to go to find food, civilians had to be escorted by a soldier. However many people were killed, it was unclear whether they were killed by ABRI who thought they were Falintil, or by Falintil themselves. According to Sister Consuela, Falintil was angry that the people had surrendered to the Indonesians and they shot some people. In A Casa seven people were killed by landmines and bombs when they went there to find food. Despite the risks of being killed by either side, the people tried to sneak out of the town in search of food.

The soldiers gave the nuns and the people who lived with them in the clinic some rice, flour, milk and sugar, but it was insufficient for the 27 people who lived in their house. For months Sister Consuela ate only watery porridge made from rice, once a day. She felt very depressed and was too weak to walk up and down the stairs. She felt powerless to help the dying children who came begging for food. The soldiers often asked the nuns what they needed, what was missing from their house. All she asked for was food. Eventually the soldiers gave the nuns rice, sugar, milk and cooking oil regularly, which they shared with the people staying with them, especially the children.

There was an Indonesian doctor and nurse from the Indonesian Red Cross in Bobonaro when the people surrendered in February 1976. They helped the nuns care for the most vulnerable children, but they left in April or May and the Carmelite nuns took over the care of the children. They fed between 120 and 180 destitute children at the clinic. They decided to give priority to the youngest children, feeding them themselves. Sr Consuela was afraid that if the food were given to their parents, it could be sold and the children would receive nothing.

The Sub-district administrator kept a record of the number of people who died. Every month, from February 1976 until the end of that year, 200 to 300 people died. The numbers decreased slightly from the beginning of 1977, and decreased again towards the end of 1979. The majority of those who died were children. Sister Consuela recalled:

> In the morning there would be dead people here, dead people there, 6 to 8 dead people, just where they were sleeping. Every day many died because they were so frail, their legs swollen, their bodies also swollen with fluid. Their hair was falling out, their stomachs were swollen. We used small needles to help remove the fluid from their bodies. The people would arrive in the evening. The following morning this one would be dead, another one would be dead. I was there and I saw it. I saw many pregnant women who gave birth and were so weak from loss of blood.
Towards the end of 1976 the Indonesian military began to issue surat jalan (travel passes) that allowed people to move outside town into the surrounding fields. The most difficult years were 1976-1978, after which the people were given more freedom to go to their fields. However it was not until 1983 that the situation really returned to normal, and the people were allowed to go back to their own villages.

After the first group left the forest to live in Bobonaro on 3 February 1976, groups of people continued to surrender almost every week until 1979. Among the last to surrender were the Bunak people, who held out in the forest for three years. Often people surrendered in groups of up to 700. Those who surrendered were always frail. Many were so weak they could not walk back into town.

Life and death in the mountains (1976 to 1978)

89. In the first phase of the invasion the Indonesian forces concentrated on taking control of strategic towns and villages and the roads connecting them. Many people lived in their villages away from Indonesian control. At this stage of the invasion, civilians who fled the advancing Indonesian forces were dispersed throughout the interior. As the military offensives were generally not directed at these areas, the people living there were able to farm and live in reasonable safety. Gilman dos Santos described to the Commission the conditions during the early years of the conflict:

Between 1975 and 1977 the food situation in the forest wasn’t so bad. People could move around and plant according to the season. The Indonesian military controlled only district and sub-district towns, even though there was some fighting in the hills.58

90. From mid-1977, however, the Indonesian military began to move into the areas it had not conquered. For those who fled their homes for safety in the interior, the advance of the Indonesian forces into these areas forced them to be constantly on the move.

**Frelilin’s bases de apoio strategy**

91. At its conference in Soibada (Manatuto) in May 1976 the Central Committee of Frelilin established structures for organising the civilian population under its control and for increasing the effectiveness of its armed wing, Falintil (see Part 5: Resistance: Structures and Strategies). The thinking underlying these changes was that the people of Timor-Leste were engaged simultaneously in waging a war and making a revolution. To further these two objectives military and civilian support bases, or bases de apoio, were established in each administrative zone. The Frelilin leadership concentrated displaced people at these bases de apoio, which became the logistical support centres for civilians and the Resistance for nearly three years. The last base was destroyed in November 1978. Xanana Gusmão described the rationale for the bases:

The concept of base de apoio came about when the population ran to the hills after the Indonesians invaded on 7 December…Suddenly we were at war, but with the people among us. The concept was to build a foundation to provide political and logistical support, but mostly political support, which we could say was revolutionary.59
92. The people of Vemasse (Vemasse, Baucau) moved three times before they finally joined other displaced communities in an area controlled and organised by Fretilin in Uaimori (Viqueque). Cosme Freitas told the Commission that the people of Vemasse first left their town because they heard that the Indonesian military had killed ten civilians in the nearby aldeia of Cairabela on 11 December 1975. A teacher named Fransisco Feliciano Ximenes led the people out of the town to Mount Lame, on the southern edge of town. They were joined by people from Cairabela and Bucoli (Baucau, Baucau). They built temporary barracks on Mount Lame. Because Indonesian forces had not yet established a permanent presence in Vemasse, the people from Vemasse were able return home to harvest their gardens, giving them enough to eat. In mid-March 1976, the Indonesian army attacked their temporary settlement with bazookas and mortars, destroying their barracks and food stores.

93. The people moved about 8km further south, along the Vemasse River to Uai-Gae. They were able to plant gardens to meet their basic needs. But the fighting kept getting closer, and they had to move again. Each time the people of Vemasse moved, it was to a place where conditions were increasingly difficult. From Uai-Gae they walked 8km east to Mount Uai Knassa. Finally they walked to Uaimori (now in Bibileo, Viqueque) in the mountains 20km south of Vemasse. Fretilin had established Uaimori as a base de apoio. People from Viqueque, Dili and other parts of Timor-Leste were also there. They lived there for two years. Life became more difficult as time passed. As more and more people came, and there was not enough food. In 1978 Uaimori came under attack, and the population fled again. Eventually, some were captured and brought to an Indonesian-controlled camp in Bucoli.

Covalima

94. Indonesian troops entered Covalima District in force in early February 1976. They attacked by land and air, and shelled the district from the sea. Their aim was to take control of the towns of Covalima rather than the countryside. Falintil suffered during these attacks, but so did ordinary townspeople and villagers. Fretilin leaders urged the people to move to the safety of the hills outside the towns. Most people from the sub-districts of Fohorem, Fatululik, Fatumean and Tilomar fled about 10km northeast to Mount Taroman. They also went to the villages of Dato Tolu (Fohorem), Fato Loro (Fatululik), Taroman (Fatululik) and Lactos (Fohorem). Many people from the town of Suai fled north and northwest about 10km to the sub-district of Maucatar. Not all residents of the town of Suai fled. Some hid in their gardens or near the beach for a few days, then surrendered to the Indonesian troops.

95. The people of the sub-district of Zumalai also fled. They went in different directions. Some went west towards Lolotoe. They scattered throughout the area that stretches from the aldeia of Gala (Beco Village, Suai) to the aldeia of Zoilpo (Guda Village, Lolotoe, Bobonaro), and down to Zoba Zova Hill (Opa Village, Lolotoe, Bobonaro) and Labarai (Suai, Covalima). Others from Zumalai fled northwest towards Zulo (Mape/Zumalai). These were all hilly or lowland areas, 10km or less from Zumalai. A few people who lived close to the border fled to the Betun District of West Timor, Indonesia. Many people who already lived in the mountains did not leave their homes at this time, as the Indonesian military was still a long way off.

96. Initially, according to witness testimonies, the displaced people in Covalima District had only had the food they took with them from their homes. They thought the war might last only two or three months. When these supplies had been eaten, they became hungry and starvation and illness struck. However, after about two months, Fretilin’s youth and women’s organisations, Organização Popular de Juventude Timorense (OPJT) and Organização Popular de Mulheres Timorense (OPMT), began to organise food supplies. This improved conditions and allowed people to survive in the hills for about one and a half years. When the Indonesian army
launched a large-scale attack on the Resistance based in the hills near Lolotoe in late 1977, the *base de apoio* was destroyed. The people were scattered, and most were captured at this time.

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<td>Ossu, Viqueque, Uatu-Lari, Uatu Carbau</td>
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<td>Lacluta, Alta, Ossu, Laleia, Natarborra, Barique, Maubisse, Same. Later moved to Mount Matebian.</td>
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<td>Viqueque Town, Uatu Carbau, Ossu, Baucau, Lospalos</td>
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*Source: CAVR Research Notes*

97. As the Indonesian attacks grew more intense, more rigorous security was put in place in the *bases de apoio*. The camps were organised in concentric rings of Falintil troops (*Companhias de Intervenção*) on the outer perimeter, with civilian defence forces called Forças de Auto-Defesa (Fade, also known as Armas Brancas) forming the next ring, and civilians concentrated at the centre. People were forbidden to move outside the perimeter.97

**Life in the bases de apoio**

98. Life in the *bases de apoio* was highly organised. Everyone was required to work in communal gardens as well as in their own personal gardens. The youth and women's organisations, OPJT and OPMT, had the task of organising people to plant rice, corn, tubers and other crops which were distributed to those in need and to feed the Falintil soldiers. The women also were required to weave cloth and produce traditional medicines. Rudimentary schools were set up to teach literacy and political ideology. At night they sang songs to encourage the people to believe they could be free. Some remember this time fondly, as a time of sharing and common purpose.
A young woman’s perspective on life in a base de apoio

Maria José da Costa was born in 1962. She was 13 years old when the Indonesian military invaded Dili in 1975. When Indonesian forces advanced to Soibada (Manatuto) in 1977, she ran with everyone from her village of Manalala to hide in the nearby forest of Lehutala. They built small huts near their gardens, so that they could collect food. As the Indonesian soldiers advanced, the community moved again to Fatuberliu in Manufahi. They built huts and a school. Maria and two girls began teaching the children, using charcoal and their fingers in the sand to practice writing. They taught their pupils to face hardships using methods that had been developed in Mozambique. They started communal gardens with the children, to help their families survive. But some people still died of hunger and disease during this time.

The school had been operating for only two months before they were, again, under attack from the Indonesian military. The community moved for the third time to Lakudadur, still in Fatuberliu. Again they rebuilt their huts, but the situation did not allow them to go back to harvest their fields in Manalala.

By early 1978 a large number of people had concentrated around Fatuberliu, driven there by Indonesian military assaults. The local population helped the new arrivals, but there were families who experienced serious shortages. About 10km from where Maria lived, she counted 400 to 500 displaced persons. About 200 of them were malnourished. Maria and her friends joined an organisation called the Comissão de Apoio e Solidaridade (Solidarity and Support Committee, CAS) which provided food for those in need.

Other Fretilin organisations, including the women’s and youth organisations, OPMT and OPJT, collected food. Eleven young women took turns carrying the food on horseback to places in need, including Sarin and Fukiran (both in Alas, Manufahi), and Fatuberliu. Working in two groups, the young women would spend one week in each location. Every morning they would make a mix of pounded cassava and corn, and when it was available, deer meat. They distributed the food to those in need twice a day. The CAS also educated the villagers about the importance of boiling drinking water, how to make toilets and other aspects of hygiene. With the help of a nurse named Felisberto Gouveia Leite, they learned to make traditional medicine from roots and vegetation. They also organised the burial of the dead. During a two-month period, about four people died every day. Maria still remembers how she took care of a very sick child, who eventually died. They asked community leaders to give moral support to the people through talks and presentations about the objectives of Fretilin. At night they would have free time to play, sing, dance and tell stories. Many songs of struggle were created during this period. Times were hard but at night they would come together in this way so they did not just passively accept their situation.

Two months later Maria and her friends had to cease all their activities because they were, again, under attack. They moved again, for the fourth time. The attack began in August 1978 and continued for three months. Eleven young women, all under 18 years old, were members of the CAS under the coordination of Soi Mali (Maria José Brites Boavida) and Aurora Assunção Sarmento. Most members of the CAS were relatives of Nicolau Lobato. Only five survived the war. Many died in 1978 or 1979. Some were shot, others were kidnapped and disappeared. Maria survived because she surrendered in an area where she was not known. The few who knew about her activities did not say anything. She told the Commission “I am sure if the soldiers knew I was active in Fretilin, they would have killed me in 1979 when I surrendered. I was 16 years old.”

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1 The Commission learned that Felisberto Gouveia Leite, his wife Alexandrina, four children and a foster-child were all executed in Fahenehan, Fatuberliu in July 1979 [see 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances].
99. Although they supported Fretilin and recognised the need to provide for the troops, others referred to the agricultural labour required of them as “kerja paksa secara halus” – a subtle form of forced labour. This was especially true for the women, who bore the main burden of feeding and clothing the troops.99 Some describe it as more extreme, as a time of forced labour, increasing distrust, intolerance of dissent and harsh justice. Discipline was enforced by the linha da luta (the line of the struggle) and was very strict. Public as well as private problems were settled by political cadres.100 The community of Defawasi (Baguia, Baucau) described the strict regime:

Punishment and torture were part of the emergency situation of war. Violators were put in traditional prisons such as pig-sties. [For] less serious violators, the punishment was to clear land to be cultivated over an area which was determined by the assembleia popular (a type of open people’s court). 101

100. Food production generally met the needs of the population in the bases for more than one year. As attacks by Indonesian forces intensified, food supplies were disrupted. Civilian deaths from hunger, disease and constant shelling began to rise dramatically. People became increasingly concentrated in a few isolated locations such as Mount Matebian, Alas and the Natarbora Plain. The Commission received testimonies describing the hardship and loss of life during this period. The people of Ahic (Lacluta, Viqueque) recalled the losses they suffered:

After the bombing began, Fretilin told people to flee to the forest and we constantly moved as Falintil ordered us. They began to open two places for processing sago, one in Kohok (now Wekfia), and the other called CP-2 (Centro Piloto-2). In CP-2 people were also to work the ricefields in Aitara, Buadara and We-Beikas, We-Look. On 10 July 1978 ABRI and Hansip broke through into Ahic and people began to flee to the west to Uma-Tolu, through Zona Barique Bora to the Sahen River. In Mota Maurick Zona Barique there was more fighting between Falintil and ABRI, and many families were separated. Falintil gave an order prohibiting livestock to be brought along, so all animals except horses had to be killed. From the post at Aito’os we had to flee to Natarbora at the Sahen River. From there we fled more attacks and headed back east along the beach south of Werow, Hali-Boco, Mota Dilor, Amanas Rai and then to Welalir, Nuhukmesak and other places. Some people wanted to go back and harvest rice from their ricefields in Aitara and Buadara but the bombing campaign forced them to abandon their crops. No one had time to grow food because we were always being harassed by the enemy. We had to leave our belongings behind and they were looted by ABRI and Hansip. Many family members lost their lives...The value of our losses cannot be calculated.102

101. Many other people gave evidence to the Commission about the deaths of their family members due to hunger and lack of medical care in the mountains. The following accounts are examples of this suffering.
Moises da Costa of Manufahi told the Commission:

Mount Kabaki was destroyed. A Fretilin commander organised my family to go to the forest. My mother, Prisca de Araújo, died when [the Indonesian military] bombed Uskai. We ran to Mau-Ulo (Ainaro, Ainaro), then to Fatumeta. We stayed five days and my son Evalino died there. We walked on to Mauleo. My wife, Ludvina da Costa, died from hunger in the forest in the Ainaro area in 1977.  

A man from Ainaro (identity withheld) described a mass population movement to the central sector during which more that 1,600 people died and only a few survived.  

Mateus da Silva of Baucau told the Commission:

In 1976 to 1977 the Indonesian military conducted operations in Uatu-Carbau and Bagua. There was shooting between [ABRI] and Falintil. My family and our community fled to the foot of Mount Matebian. When they bombed Ketikura, the sound of weapons made people scared to look for food and children and old people died from lack of food. My child died because my wife could not produce breast milk. The shooting continued and my grandfather, who was about 60 years old, died due to hunger. In November 1978 we surrendered at the sub-district of Bagua, but we still did not have sufficient food and medicine. Many died, including my mother.  

A man from Baucau (identity withheld) described how in October 1977 Falintil ordered people to move to Mount Matebian. Between then and their surrender in 1979, many died. After surrender, he said that deaths continued.  

Moises da Costa of Manufahi told the Commission:

Because of the war we ran to Wetare, Alas in 1978. We planted crops but the Indonesian army attacked us and we could not harvest them. We left everything behind and moved to We Alas. We planted rice in large quantities but, again, because of enemy attacks we had to move to an area called Kolakau on the coast. We got separated there and my father was captured by Indonesian soldiers. We moved again to a place called Wemer where we stayed for eight months. And again we had to move, to Atabita. There my mother died due to hunger and sickness. There was no medicine. The next morning my younger sister died too. We buried them and moved to Lokfeu. A friend of ours named Calistro, under orders from [ABRI], brought us to surrender in Uma Metan. My brother, Domingos dos Santos, died in this place [Uma Metan] due to lack of food and medicine. He was only 22 years old.  

Mateus da Conceição of Manufahi told the Commission that in 1978:

We were concentrated in the area of Kolakau and Besusu (Uma Berloik, Alas, Manufahi) when the enemy attacked us. The population was not free to move around, and because of that many civilians died. Hundreds. They died because of hunger and sickness.
• Luis Casmiro Martins Aiceu of Raimerhei (Ermera, Ermera) told the Commission that many people died in his community between 1975 and 1980. He recorded the deaths suffered among 27 families who lived in Aiceu and who ran to the mountains in March 1976 when the Indonesian army entered their village. In total he documented 230 deaths and their immediate causes. He listed 11 people who died in 1975, 51 who died in 1976, 74 died in 1977, 54 who died in 1978, 30 in 1979, and ten in 1980. He categorised them according to the following: death as a result of bombing (3), not buried (12), deaths from wounds (14), missing (15), starvation (4), disease and hunger (181), shot by ABRI (1). 109

102. As conditions worsened and the bombing increased, many people wanted to surrender in order to save their lives and those of their families. They were prevented from doing so for political reasons. Fretilin believed that its political legitimacy would be undermined if people surrendered, and that encouraging people to do so was an act of treason.

**Detention for wanting to surrender**

103. The Fretilin leadership kept strict control over the population living around the bases de apoio. A rudimentary judicial processes was established to punish those whose actions were thought to harm the community or put it at risk. A person accused of wrong-doing would be arrested and brought first before the military leadership, and then before the civilian leadership of the zone. The person to determine if someone had done wrong was the regional political commissar (Comissário Político Regional, CPR). It was his responsibility to ensure that the political line of the leadership was followed. Sometimes, especially in the early days, there would be a people’s court (Justiça Popular). But the political commissar had a lot of influence on a people’s court. Those found guilty would be detained in make-shift prisons known as Renal (Reabilitação Nasional).

104. Many detainees in the Renal experienced ill-treatment and torture. [see 7.4: Detention, Torture and Ill-Treatment] As the bombings and hunger increased, some people living in the bases de apoio wanted to surrender to the Indonesian military. However surrender was considered by Fretilin a risk to the security of the Fretilin forces and the civilians with them.

105. The Commission heard many accounts about people who were put in prison because the leadership believed they might surrender or suspected that they had had or were intending to have contact with Indonesian forces. Antonino Rodrigues from Faturilau, Fahi Soi (Liquioide, Aileu) was arrested by Fretilin in 1978. Faturilau had come under attack by ABRI. Because Antonino was afraid and his 50-year-old father, Berleki, was ill, the two tried to escape on a horse under cover of night. Before they could leave Faturilau, they were caught by F41, the assistant for security to the adjunto, F42, and nine other men. F41 and his men arrested Antonino Rodrigues on suspicion of having been in contact with ABRI. The next morning they loosened, but did not remove the ties on his hands and took him to Adjunto F42 at Sungai River, Sumiun. F42 told one of his commanders, F43, to beat, kick and trample on Antonino Rodrigues for one hour. After that F42 ordered Antonino Rodrigues to carry equipment for Falintil during a move. 110

106. Miguel da Costa, from Sabuli Village (Metinaro, Dili), reported that Fretilin troops arrested his brother, Jorgé Carvalho, in 1977 because he was playing with a football, which he had found on the beach. Falintil was suspicious, thinking he must have been in contact with the Indonesian troops in the town and concluded that he had become a spy for Indonesia. The Fretilin troops put him in the Renal in Remexio (Aileu), where he later died. 111

107. Lucia de Jesus Barreto reported that in 1978 she and her family were in the base de apoio in Fatuberliu (Manufahi). Because they were desperate for food, her son Bastião da Silva, who was only 14, and a friend Alcino da Costa went to Lisimori in the village of Mada Beno (Laulara, Aileu) to look for food. They were arrested by Falintil on suspicion of being spies. The
two were imprisoned in the Renal in Remexio, where they were given very little food. Bastião da Silva became ill and died in the Renal.\textsuperscript{112}

108. Agustinho da Costa told Commission that in 1976 he and his family fled an area called Komite Rame, Uatu-Uani (Ossu, Viqueque) where many displaced communities had concentrated after an attack by Indonesian soldiers. They moved to Leki Loho, which was under control of Falintil and the location of a Renal. During this time a traditional leader (liurai) from Uaguia-Ossu, Gaspar Reis, escaped with his followers to surrender to the Indonesian military in the town of Ossu. Because of this Agustinho and his family were arrested by the Falintil leaders. He told the Commission:

\begin{quote}
They put me and my wife, Dominggas da Costa, my child Mau-Naha and eight other people inside a “pig pen.” We were beaten with a stick, kicked, punched and slapped. We were given water mixed with salt to drink. At night our hands were tied behind our backs. We were in the Renal in Leki Loho for one year. My friend, Olo-Gari, died from the torture by Falintil.\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}
Elias Quintão was the Fretilin leader (delegado) for the village of Hatu Makerek (Laclubar, Manufahi). In a detailed interview he told the Commission of his experience of detention by Fretilin and the suffering of hunger of prisoners in these circumstances. The following summary is based on this interview.

The people of Hatu Makerek had fled to the forest near their homes after the Indonesian armed forces invaded. On 15 August 1977 the Falintil zone commander, F44, and his men arrested Elias Quintão and his bodyguard, Luís Kehebau. They were still in the Hatu Makerek area. The Falintil men tied Elias Quintão’s hands behind his back. Commander F44 shouted to the people who were watching that Elias Quintão was a traitor. They told him to walk to the front of the office where they handed him over to the zone secretary, F45, and to the commander of the Sector Centro Sul, F46.

The Laclubar zone committee said that Elias Quintão had been planning to surrender to the Indonesian military, together with the people from Hatu Makerek. They interrogated Elias Quintão and then put him in a cell. They put his feet in stocks made from bamboo. His hands were still tied behind his back. They only released his hands and his feet to let him eat. They did not beat him.

After 40 days, at the end of September 1977, F45 told Elias Quintão that he would send the prisoners to Rameliak (Turiscal, Manufahi), the command centre for Centro Sul Sector and the location of the sector’s Renal. There the minister for justice, F50, would deal with the prisoners. F45 also threatened to cut off Elias Quintão’s head. Then Elias Quintão walked to Rameliak, tied to another prisoner named Sabino and escorted by four armed Falintil soldiers.

Arriving at Rameliak at 5.00 p.m. after finishing his work, the two prisoners were taken to see Commanders F48 and F49. The two commanders put the prisoners in a cell. Elias Quintão, his hands still tied, shared a cell with Father Mariano Soares. He stayed in this cell for nearly four months, until early January 1978. He had to work in the corn garden and cook for Falintil. He was always kept under guard, but was not beaten. His hands were not tied while he worked, but at night he was tied up. According to Elias Quintão there were as many as 146 prisoners in Rameliak.

In early January 1978 he was moved to Alas where he was detained for five months until mid May 1978. He was still waiting to see F50, the minister for justice. The prisoners were also required to work. After taking a bath in the river, they were told to work in the rice fields, while Falintil guarded them with guns. He was not beaten but received only one small meal a day, at 2.00 p.m. after finishing his work.

When the Indonesian military surrounded Alas, the prisoners were moved to a place near Betano where they stayed He was there until the end of July 1978. The prisoners had to work making salt for Falintil. Again they were always guarded by armed Falintil soldiers though they were not beaten and they received one small meal every day. Elias Quintão was very weak by this time. He was sick and hungry, but he still had to work.

Finally, at the end of July 1978, Elias Quintão and 27 other prisoners met F50, the minister of justice. He told them: "Now I will interrogate you. Anyone who is proved to have done wrong will be punished. However, if the interrogation reveals no wrong-doing, you will be set free." After being interrogated one by one, all of the prisoners were set free.

Soon after they were released, the Indonesian military attacked again. Battalion 744 captured Elias Quintão and took him to Uma Metan (Alas, Manufahi).
109. The largest number of cases of imprisonment of people allegedly wanting to surrender happened in 1977. At this time the Indonesian attacks on the Fretilin-controlled bases de apoio were growing in intensity. Life in the bush became more difficult. Some Fretilin leaders and Falintil commanders were in favour of letting people surrender, leaving Falintil in the mountains to continue the fight. The most important Fretilin leader to take this position was Francisco Xavier do Amaral, then President of Fretilin. For this reason the Fretilin Central Committee arrested him in September 1977. Although he survived, many of Francisco Xavier do Amaral’s close colleagues and alleged followers were executed.

110. During the CAVR National Public Hearing on the Internal Political Conflict, Francisco Xavier Amaral described the rift in the Fretilin leadership, and his subsequent imprisonment by Fretilin as a “traitor”. He recalled that he was very concerned about the many sick and hungry people among the civilian population in the mountains with Fretilin.

I spoke with Nicolao Lobato about this. I said, “I think this problem is really serious. Firstly, we don’t know when this war will end. Secondly, we cannot compare our forces to the Indonesian forces. Thirdly, our logistical preparations to provide food to the people [were not sufficient]. Fourthly, our wounded soldiers, women giving birth in the forest, orphans, people with broken arms and legs, and we have no medicine.”

So this was my idea. We should send the population to surrender. Only those men who were strong and could fight the war would stay with the Central Committee. Because we didn’t know how many years it would be before the war was over. We planned this, and then we went to a Central Committee meeting...There I discovered that one or two had ideas that weren’t the same as mine. There began to be a rift within Fretilin. We had begun to divide among ourselves. Some said that the doctrine [of Fretilin] was not right. Some said that the doctrine was right but people weren’t following it properly. Some said it was good. We began to lose our trust in each other...

Because of this they arrested me, put me in prison and accused me...of having sent people to surrender so that in the future when I surrendered to Indonesia, they would give me a position as a general or a minister. This was the argument of those who were against me.  

111. As many community discussions organised by the Commission attested, the affect of this rift on communities still in the mountains at this time was profound. This was especially so in those districts and sub-districts where support for Xavier do Amaral was alleged to be strong, such as Turiscal, Maubisse, Aileu and Manatuto. The entries for 1977 in two typical accounts from community discussions in the district of Aileu convey the atmosphere at this time. The community of Hoholau (Aileu Town, Aileu) told the Commission:
People were saddened by the arrest of Xavier. The situation became tight. The guia de marcha [travel pass] was introduced, and those who did not have them were dubbed traitors. The Central Committee ordered our commander F51 to move the people from Hoholau to Liquiçao. The colaborador of Zona 3, F52 came to tell the people that they must move to the forest in Liquiçao. About 500 people did move, a small number stayed in Hoholau. ABRI took advantage of the situation to kill three. F52 shot dead some people who do not want to go to Liquiçao. About 300 died in Liquiçao.116

112. The community of Lausi/Bandudato (Aileu Town, Aileu) also explained to the Commission:

The arrest of Francisco Xavier do Amaral led to widespread suspicion. A commander from Bandudato, Paulino Xavier Pereira, was arrested. Nine days later his troops went to visit him in the Renal, but they could not find him. Those not in possession of a travel pass were accused of having contact with the enemy, arrested and punished in Rai Kuak Lebututu, which was under control of Adjunto F53…People wanted to surrender but had to keep it secret.117

On the run (1976 to 1978)

113. During the first three years of the Indonesian occupation increasing numbers of East Timorese people were constantly on the move. In the first year of the war people fled from the main administrative centres into the mountainous countryside as the occupying force took control of those centres. Then, in 1977 and 1978, the Indonesian military moved into the rural areas to gain control of the bulk of the population and weaken the armed resistance. Over time this action caused a massive dislocation of the bulk of population as it sought to avoid coming under Indonesian control. The effect of continual dislocation on the well-being of the population was calamitous.

Destruction of food sources

114. Traditional agricultural systems in Timor-Leste have supported the population for generations. Before the Indonesian invasion the bulk of the population was spread throughout the land in small settlements built close to fertile areas. The dislocation of the population from these settlements by military action led directly to food shortages. Worse, Indonesian forces also deliberately destroyed crops, fruit trees, livestock and food stores during this period of the occupation.

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1 In the Central Committee denunciation of Francisco Xavier do Amaral, it is alleged that his associates had been crossing the lines to make contact with the enemy, and in what is probably a reference to the introduction of the guia de marcha, that such movement had been "sufficiently restricted" with the introduction by the North Central Sector Political Commissariat of direct controls on people’s movements. [A Nossa Vitoria é Apenas Questão de Tempo, Communicado do Comité do C C do Freti de 14/9/77, aquando do tração de Xavier do Amaral, (Our Victory is just a matter of time. Communiqué of the Freti Central Committee 14/9/97, regarding the betrayal of Xavier do Amaral p.20].
115. Eye-witnesses told the Commission how, as the military campaign to force the surrender of the population in the mountains escalated, Indonesian soldiers destroyed food crops belonging to East Timorese civilians. By the end of the 1970s this strategy of food crop destruction contributed directly to dire food shortages and famine conditions throughout Timor-Leste.

116. The Indonesian military destroyed food crops, fruit trees and livestock. From the accounts given below this tactic seems to have had a variety of motives and to have been implemented in different circumstances. Sometimes it appears to have been a form of punishment and a display of power over the civilian population. On other occasions it seems to have been intended to have had the more military objective of denying Falintil food. It was used as part of the forced displacement of people from one village to another. However, in those circumstances in which the civilian population had fled only a short distance from their homes its purpose seems to have been to force people to surrender.

117. Examples of each of these phenomena follow.

118. The Commission received evidence that the military strategy of destroying food sources started in the earliest days of the Indonesian invasion. For example the Commission heard testimony describing the Indonesian military’s systematic destruction of livestock in Metinaro in December 1975.

119. Another deponent described an exodus of the population from Laleia (Manatuto) to Natarbora (Manatuto) in 1975. During the people’s absence, the Indonesian military destroyed the villager’s food crops. This led to great difficulty for the people in finding food, and deaths resulted.

120. In another example described to the Commission, when ABRI attacked a village in Lacluta (Viqueque) in 1978, people fled to the forest. When they felt safe to return to their village, their houses, livestock and coconut trees had all been destroyed by the Indonesian military. The difficulties they faced finding food forced them to surrender in 1979.

121. In 1977 in Laclo (Manatuto) Indonesian soldiers drove off hungry refugees who came down from the mountains to harvest their fields. The soldiers burned the gardens and shot the livestock.

122. The Commission heard of a similar example in Laga (Baucau). After people fled to the forest, Indonesian soldiers killed their livestock, took away all the families’ food supplies, and burned the people’s houses.

123. After Alda Pereira da Silva and his family evacuated their home in Osso Rua (Ossu, Viqueque) in 1976, Indonesian soldiers burned three of their houses, their livestock and rice barn.

124. After Agapito Quintão and his family fled their home in Irabin, Letarea (Uatu Carbau, Viqueque) Indonesian soldiers burned his house and rice stock, and killed a horse and five pigs.

125. Fransisco Barbosa was a Falintil commander. He and a large group of people from the villages of Foholau, Orana and Matorek (Turiscai, Manufahi) escaped south to Alas and Welaluhu (Fatuberliu, Manufahi) when the Indonesian military attacked Turiscai in 1978. When he was captured with a group of 150 others, Indonesian troops and Hansip brought them back to Turiscai. The Indonesian military had burned their houses, agricultural implements, stores of corn
and dried cassava and had also taken some of their food to sell in the town. They were left with only some potatoes and cassava tubers were still left in their gardens.\textsuperscript{125}

126. In 1978 Indonesian soldiers and Hansip attacked the aldeia of Tasidadula, Dilor (Lacluta, Viqueque) where Queierminho Campos and his family lived. They burned all his food supplies. The villagers fled. Queierminho Campos later surrendered with his family.\textsuperscript{126}

127. After Maria Alves surrendered in 1979 she returned to her village, Bubususu (Fatuberliu, Manufahi), and made a new house and prepared fields. The Indonesian military ordered her family to move again to another village, then burned her food crops (papaya and tubers) and her house to make sure she left and did not come back to her village.\textsuperscript{127}

128. In April 1976, soon after Indonesian forces entered Lautém, Battalion 502 captured Paulo de Jesus in Parlemento (Com, Moro, Lautém). They burned all his food supplies (maize) as well as his house.\textsuperscript{128}

129. In 1976, António Soares and his uncle, Cristovão da Costa, were guarding a Falintil post in Esa-Isi (Ossu, Viqueque). Three members of Hansip on patrol in Esa-Isi discovered them and shot Cristovão da Costa dead. They then burned the family’s houses, and stole 40 buffaloes, 31 horses, 58 goats and the contents of their five rice barns.\textsuperscript{129}

130. In 1977, in his presence, members of Hansip burned Berteti Mauhui’s maize field in Hut-Manhati in Letefoho (Same, Manufahi) and took all his food supplies and livestock.\textsuperscript{130}

131. The Commission also received evidence which shows that even after most civilians had surrendered, the Indonesian military continued to shoot livestock and destroy food crops by burning them or cutting down fruit trees and pulling them up by the roots. The objective was to deny food to Falintil. The Indonesian military called these operations curlog (penghancuran logistik, logistical destruction). This practice also affected the food security of civilians, as the fruit trees and crops belonged to ordinary people who needed them for their own survival.

\textit{Destruction of food crops by Fretilin}

132. The Commission received testimony that Fretilin/Falintil forces were also involved in the destruction of crops. Compared with the number of reports of the Indonesian military committing such acts, reported instances of the burning and destruction of crops by members of Fretilin/Falintil were relatively few. Nevertheless, it is important to note that such violations did take place. For example, Father Eligio Locatelli of Fatumaca (Baucau, Baucau) told the Commission:

\textit{Between 1975 and 1978 ABRI and Fretilin destroyed civilian agricultural plots and killed scores of livestock. Fretilin burned people’s crops saying that people’s farms needed to be far from the towns, so that they could make use [of the produce] for themselves. When people returned to their land, there were no animals to work it. As a result people could not plant and remained hungry.}\textsuperscript{137}

\textit{Driven by hunger and bombardment from the air}

133. Between 1977 and 1978 the Indonesian military systematically attacked the bases de apoio using every means at their disposal to ensure their final destruction. This military campaign was in effect the final stage of Operation Seroja that began with the full-scale invasion on 7 December 1975. The Indonesian military deployed massive numbers of troops to surround the large population concentrations into which the Fretilin/Falintil leadership and the displaced civilian
populations had either been driven or had fled, and then used overwhelming firepower to force them into submission. Because of the tactic adopted by the Indonesian military, the East Timorese Resistance called the campaign the encirclement and annihilation campaign (cerco e aniquilamento, see Part 3: The History of the Conflict).

Manufahi

134. In August 1978 Indonesian troops attacked the base de apoio of the South Central Sector in Alas, Manufahi. The attacks lasted for three months, causing many civilian deaths from bombs and bullets but especially from starvation. Because the offensive took place during the dry season, fires started by bombs burned large tracts of vegetation and burned people to death. Thousands were forced to surrender or were captured, and were placed in military camps in Betano (Same, Manufahi), Selihasan (6 kilometres east of Betano township, Same, Manufahi), Uma Metan (a temporary camp 400 metres south of Alas Town, Manufahi), Lebos (a temporary camp 2 kilometres southwest of Alas Town, Manufahi), and the town of Same.132

Covalima

135. People displaced in Covalima were living on Mount Taroman (Fatululik, Covalima) and Maucatar (Suai, Covalima) when the Indonesian army attacked in September and October 1977. The Fretilin leadership moved the people to the Zoilpo/Zova area in the lowlands west of Lolotoe (Bobonaro). Many people surrendered to the Indonesian military before they reached the Zoilpo/Zova area and were directed to live near the military posts in Beco (Suai). By this time, the Fretilin leadership in Covalima had its base at Zuak, just south of the town of Lolotoe (Bobonaro).133 Nearby was Zova Hill, four kilometers south-east of Lolotoe township, which was a leadership training centre for Fretilin cadres. The Indonesian military had occupied the town of Lolotoe, but not yet the countryside around it. During the move to Zoilpo/Zova many people died from Indonesia military attacks. Those who survived and did not surrender remained in the area around Zoilpa/Zova for about another 12 months. Indonesian forces did not conduct intensive operations in this area during that time. Their helicopters and planes frequently passed overhead without attacking. However, food supplies were dwindling and people were forced to eat wild foods such as roots and sago. Sometimes they secretly harvested fields planted by other people.134

136. When Indonesian forces began to attack the base de apoio again, the Fretilin leadership decided to evacuate the population to the Northern Frontier Sector (Sector Fronteira Norte), based in the Fatubesi area in Ermera. They decided to split the population into two large groups. One planned to go west via Mount Taroman and then north; the other to go east via Beco and then north via Mount Ucecai, (Mape/Zumalai, Covalima). The first group managed to reach Ermera District on foot, but were then captured by the Indonesian military and were placed in a camp in Fatubesi. The second group did not succeed. Though weakened by hunger and disease, which had already taken many lives, they reached the lowlands south of Zumalai, an area known as Halic. They then crossed the Loumea River near Beco, but in January 1978, as they approached the Mola River, they came under attack from Indonesian forces.135

137. Many people are thought to have died in this attack. The survivors of the massacre at the Mola River retreated back to Halic, which was not yet under Indonesian control. Airplanes strafed and bombed the refugees; navy ships fired shells at them; machine gun fire continued into the night. The operation went on for two days and by the end most of the refugees who had survived had been captured.
The dead were everywhere. They had died from starvation, the bombardments and sickness. There were some corpses still holding sweet potatoes, mangoes and food, even though parts of their bodies were rotting and snakes were crawling over them. But we still had to take and clean [the food] with a cloth or whatever was available, so that we could eat it, because we were also just waiting for our turn to die from hunger. There was no clean water, only pools of soiled water in which there were dead buffaloes and human corpses. We had to filter [the water] with clothes or sarongs so that we could drink it.\(^\text{136}\)

138. The Indonesian military placed the people they captured in camps including one at Beco. Soldiers guarded them closely. The people received some food from the Indonesian army and from the Church, but it was not enough. Help from overseas had not yet arrived. The people were already weak; and many more died in the military-controlled camps.

*Uaimori, Viqueque*

139. When the Indonesian military attacked the Uaimori base in September 1978, the people first fled further south, walking all the way to the Natarbora Plain, just south of the village of Umaboco (Barique, Manatuto). Many people were killed when they were attacked during this journey. Those in the Vemasse group who survived this attack turned north towards their home village, but were captured by Hansip and ABRI at Osso Ala (Vemasse, Baucau). Indonesian armed forces took them to Bucoli (Baucau, Baucau). Cosme Freitas from Vemasse (Baucau) described the terror and anguish of those on the run from Indonesian military attacks in 1978:

When we evacuated from Uaimori, people began to die. From starvation or from illness. As we walked, death stalked us. Death was behind us as we walked, and people died. Not only old people, but children, through lack of food. The old people walked, their strength all gone, carrying just one maek [a species of tuber], or a kumbili [sweet yam]. And a little water in a bamboo container on their backs. This is how many of us died. The dead were scattered all along the way [from Uamori to Natarbora]. Others died from the mortars, 80 to 100 a day. We wanted to bury them, but the enemy kept shooting, so how could we bury them? We ran on. An old woman said: "Please my son, dig a hole to bury the my child's body." We dug a hole, but less than half a metre deep. Before lowering the little angel into the hole we wrapped it in a mat to the sound of continuing gunfire. How could we bury it? We bent our heads and buried it with our hands.

Those we could, we buried. Otherwise they were left behind. How can we now find their bones? They rotted just as they were. We saw seven or eight people were sitting while leaning against a tree. They leaned against the tree and died like that. Flies and dogs were around them. In our hearts we were terrified.\(^\text{137}\)
140. The community of the village of Liurai (Turiscai, Manufahi) told the Commission about the losses they suffered as they moved from place to place between 1976 and 1979. Their experience is summarised below:

1976: Indonesian forces entered Turiscai in March. The people and [our] forces stayed in the village of Liurai. Fretilin fought with ABRI in Geligili and three Falintil soldiers were killed. ABRI entered Liurai, killing two Falintil soldiers in Sakoko. People fled to the mountain top, some fled to Liquideo [in Aileu], others to Orana and Foholau [both in Turiscai]. Of those who moved to Liquideo, 80 died due to hunger and disease, and 220 died due to hunger and disease in Orana and Foholau.

1977: The Liquideo base de apoio was destroyed. The villagers from Liurai living in Liquideo ran in all directions, including to Orana and Foholau. 250 people died due to hunger and disease.

1978: In August the people left [Turiscai] to move to Alas and Fatuberliu. 50 people died due to hunger and disease in Besusu, Alas. Forty people died due to hunger and disease in Carauha (Fatuberliu).

1979: ABRI attacked from the sea, from the sky, and by land. The people ran from Alas and Fatuberliu back to Sarin in Alas. Others ran to the town of Turiscai (which was under Indonesian control). Twenty people died from hunger and disease in Sarin; 120 people died in Turiscai.

1980-1981: The people of Liurai lived in Turiscai. Three women (one married, two 14 year old girls) became victims of [sexual] violations by Indonesian soldiers. Indonesian and Hansip soldiers controlled members of the community who looked for food in Orana and Foholau.¹³⁸

141. Tomás Barbosa, also from Turiscai, described the final days of the Sector Centro Sul base de apoio:

The bombs they dropped destroyed everything. When we went to get water we did not know if it was contaminated. We did not know if we were going to die from that or from hunger. We still tried to help others who did not have food. We ran towards the coast, to Welalu and and then to Alas. But the Indonesian forces kept coming. We ran in all directions. At the Suain River I saw a woman who had died holding her baby to her breast. The baby was still alive, sucking his mother’s breast. I saw this with my own eyes. But what could I have done? I was sick, I could not walk, I was carrying my own child. I had to leave him behind. I saw people dying all around me.”¹³⁹
142. By October 1978, when the Indonesian military launched its all-out assault on Mount Matebian, tens of thousands of civilians were concentrated on Mount Matebian. Some had been there since 1975. Others had fled there from other bases that had fallen; yet others were organised by Fretilin to move to the mountain.

143. Immediately after the Indonesian invasion of Dili in 1975, people started to flee to Mount Matebian. Some came from as far away as Dili and headed east because that was where their original home was.140 Most came from places nearby and were settled in villages on the lower slopes of the mountain such as the village of Lavateri in the sub-district of Baguia. In 1977 evacuees from other villages were organised into new aldeias, according to their place of origin. There were aldeias for people from the Baucau villages of Tekinomata, Samalari and Boleha (all in Laga, Baucau) and Gurusu, Afasa, Namanei (all in Quelicai, Baucau). Those from Dili were impressed by the level of organisation they found on Matebian. People who had been at Matebian from the aldeias of Benamauk, Camae and Fatuahi (Cristu Rei, Dili) said that in Baguia up until the final assault there was sufficient food and people were not dying. They attributed this to the leadership in their zone, the political commissar, Abel Larisina, and Adjunto Xanana Gusmão, who was in charge of economic welfare.141

144. The Indonesian military earlier attacked the base de apoio at Mount Builo (Viqueque) in the middle of 1977. Since 1976, displaced people from Ossu, Uatu-Lari, Viqueque Town, Uatu Carbau (all in Viqueque) and Baucau had been concentrated there. According to Horacio da Silva, in the first few months after the evacuation to Builo two or three people died from hunger and disease each day. The Fretilin leadership improved the situation by organising communal gardens but the Indonesian military discovered the location and attacked Mount Builo in 1977. Many civilians died as a direct result of the attack. Horacio da Silva told the Commission:

Our homes were burned. Cattle, buffalo and horses were stolen or killed and left to rot. Our harvest was burned and destroyed as were our fields. The whole location was totally razed. The operation was carried out by ABRI, Hansip and Partisans. Many people surrendered or were captured and were taken to camps in Uatu-Lari and Viqueque.142

145. Others ran to Mount Matebian, the last base de apoio in Timor-Leste. Fretilin organised the people into cooperatives and established communal gardens. The harvest was stored in “logistics warehouses” and food was distributed to Falintil soldiers and all those in urgent need. But conditions were not as good as on Mount Builo and more people died of starvation and illness on Mount Matebian.

146. Fretilin started organising the movement of people from Lautém to Mount Matebian in 1977. Not all moved willingly. The community of Puno (Pairara, Moro) told the Commission that they had been forced to move.143 The people of Iliomar were the last group from Lautém to be moved to Matebian,144 leaving their base on Mount Laqumau in the sub-district of Luro in June 1978, as they heard the gunfire of the Indonesian forces approaching from Uatu Carbau.145 When they reached Matebian they settled in Lavateri region. As the Indonesian forces stepped up their attacks, they moved up the mountain from Lavateri to Siriafa and from there to the top of Matebian.

147. Once the all-out Indonesian attack on Matebian began life on the mountain became intolerable (see Box: Testimony of Survivors of Matebian). In their community discussion with the Commission, the people of Defawasi (Baguia, Baucau) said that Indonesian forces fenced off Mount Matebian like a noose. As the noose tightened, the people on the mountain were being
more and more tightly packed together. Xanana Gusmão wrote that he began to doubt the wisdom of the strategy of concentrating people on Matebian:

I regretted moving all those people to Matebian was literally full and problems arose everywhere between the recent arrivals with the local residents. \[146\]

148. It was at this point that the Fretilin leadership changed its strategy, allowing the people to surrender but on the understanding that they “always fight for independence: you may give your arms and legs to the enemy, but you must give your hearts to your country” (“nafatin ukun rasik aan: liman ho ain fo ba inimigo maibe laran fo ba o-nia rain”).
Testimony of survivors of the Matebian bombings

Horacio da Silva: from Ossu, (Viqueque) described the final days of those who had sought refuge on Mount Matebian. Between 1976 and 1977, many people from Ossu, Uatu-Lari, Viqueque Town, Uatu Carbau and Baucau lived under the protection of Fretilin/Falintil soldiers in an area called Builo. In Builo Fretilin organised communal agricultural activities to provide for the needs of civilians and armed forces. In 1977 ABRI began intensive attacks on Builo. People surrendered in Uatu-Lari and Viqueque, but others moved on to Matebian, the last base de apoio holding out against the Indonesian military assault. The final days in Matebian were very difficult.

People died of starvation and illness every day, especially the elderly and children who were malnourished…The death toll increased to 5 to 6 people per day. Although we set up a cooperative and organised people to plant communal gardens, the crops…were reserved mainly for Falintil and people who really needed it.

Horacio da Silva said that in October 1978 Indonesian forces launched an all-out assault on Mount Matebian from the air, sea and land, attacking Falintil forces and civilians alike:

We saw people die in front of us after being hit by bombs…We waited for our turn to die. There were also dead people at the water source…and we had to get drinking water from there…We walked among the dead, hid among them, because the situation made us lose our fear and we had to do it.

Horacio da Silva told the Commission that the air raids went on for two weeks without stopping. Attacks would normally start at seven in the morning and go on until about noon. There would be a short pause before they started again in the afternoon and went on until about 4.00 pm. He said,

Civilians and Falintil forces were mixed together. Every day 20 to 30 people died from the bombing, stray bullets, starvation and illness. Those who could no longer walk were just left behind somewhere, under a tree. Most of the dead were children and the elderly.

While the bombings and shelling from the sea continued, the Indonesian army began to advance into the Fretilin/Falintil strongholds. ABRI forced people to surrender and come down from the mountain. They had to leave all their possessions, including their houses, personal effects, and tools to be burned by the Indonesian army. According to Horacio da Silva: “The situation at the time was like hell.”

Leonel Guterres, now a health worker from Quelicai (Baucau) who was a child at the time, ran to Matebian in early 1976, when he heard reports of the Indonesian troop landings in Laga (Baucau). He told the Commission:

Even before we arrived on Matebian, thousands of people were already there. People from Baucau, Laga, Laivai, Baguia, Venilale, Lospalos, Manatuto, Viqueque, Same and Dili. Many of them had been there for almost three years.

Leonel described how, in order to survive, people had to rely on the food they had brought themselves, supplemented by tubers growing around the mountain. Fretilin organised collective agricultural activities, planting maize, tuber roots and beans. After it was harvested, the food was stored in a special place to be distributed only when needed. Yet survival was difficult. He explained:
Every day more and more people became hungry. Death could no longer be evaded. Every day two or three people died from hunger and illness. Children and infants died. They could not stand the hunger, the cold and having to eat food that was difficult to digest. They were fading away from malnutrition. There was no extra food and mothers could not produce enough breast milk. Every day was full of death.

However, the worst came with the assault of Mount Matebian by the Indonesian forces in late 1978. Leonel Guterres continued:

We were attacked simultaneously from the air, land and sea. The worst attacks were from the air. In one day ten planes would bomb Matebian. From 6.00am to 5.00pm the planes would drop their bombs, maybe between 5 and 20 times a day. I can’t count how many hundreds of bombs were dropped on Matebian, killing civilians and destroying the Falintil base. Hundreds of people died from shrapnel. Many lost limbs and became disabled. Corpses were everywhere, being eaten by vultures. The smell of death was everywhere. The water was contaminated and could not be drunk. We could not cook, fearing that ABRI would discover our location from the smoke. In those days around 9 to 11 people died each day from hunger.  

Francisco Soares Pinto: deputy village head of Cainliu (Iliomar, Lautém) told the Commission:

By November 1978 ABRI had totally gained the upper hand, and we could not survive any longer. The planes bombed us from morning till afternoon. We lost so many people on Matebian. The people from the aldeia of Laranin [Cainliu, Iliomar, Lautém] were hit by four mortar shells fired from Indonesian [ships] off Laga. Dozens of people died. We were already weak from lack of food, medicine and clothing.  

Other survivors told the Commission:

We were bombarded from the air, from the ships in Laga, and by ground troops. Our situation was difficult, we ran frantically to the left, to the right. My family member, Isabel Morão, died after being hit by a mortar shell.  

Some people tried to run to the top of the mountain. By October-November the situation was really chaotic. Despite the deaths and continued attacks, we still tried to get to the top of the mountain, carrying what little food we had. When we reached Lavateri, between Baguia and Laga, they attacked us at night. Countless people died. That marked the beginning of the destruction of Matebian, on 24 November 1978.  

When Matebian was destroyed, the people ran in all directions. We were separated from each other, the Resistance going one way, and the people going the other way, each looking to save themselves. Some chose to surrender. Others continued to resist in the forest.  

Indonesian forces bombed Matebian from 7.00am to 10.00am, then from 2.00pm to 7.00pm. They targeted a watering hole. In one day ten to 20 people would die near that water source. Some died of thirst. We also ran out of food and medicine. We finally surrendered on 25 November 1978.  

After the destruction of our Resistance base in November 1978, Fretilin leaders held a meeting in Lavateri. They told us that those who want to continue to fight could stay but those who can no longer bear it could surrender in the town, particularly children and the elderly. In the middle of the meeting, ABRI began to attack again. In the end Fretilin could no longer protect us. They told us to surrender.
149. In Laclo, (Manatuto), Manuel Carceres da Costa spoke of constant attacks from the Indonesian military on the base in Idada in the hills of Hatuconan (Laclo, Manatuto), including the use of the US-supplied slow-flying attack plane the OV-10 Bronco:

In May 1978 the situation became even more difficult. The enemy started attacking from all sides. In July 1978 the military began to encircle and destroy us. Many died...because they were wounded in the leg and could not walk anymore. New-born babies died of starvation. When people died we could only wrap them in mats and leave them just like that. We did not have time to bury them because the enemy kept chasing us...We moved during the night, and during the day we had to hide because the OV-10 warplanes kept following us and shooting at us and dropping bombs on us, so that many friends, family members and others died...It continued on and on.  

Alas, Manufahi

150. Other witnesses from Manufahi testified about the use by ABRI of an accelerant to burn grass fields, forcing the population to flee and killing those who could not outrun the flames:

In 1978 the enemy began to...surround Dolok [Alas]. Many died of starvation. All the food stocks were burned; some families just abandoned theirs. They surrounded us by using warships to bombard us from the sea, and warplanes to attack us from air and by burning the dry, tall grass. Then the troops attacked from land.

It was the dry season at the time [in August]. The army burned the tall grass. The fire would spread quickly, and the whole area would be ablaze as if it had been doused in gasoline. Those of us who were surrounded didn’t have time to escape because the flames were so big. Their strategy trapped many people.

People managed to escape late at night when the Indonesian army withdrew to their camps. When we got out we would still be showered with shells from the warships at sea. I saw many people burn to death. My grandmother burned. At the time she screamed for water to drink because she was suffering from the heat, the fire had burned her up to her hair. I could only tie three jugs of water to her neck and then we continued walking out of the area. We couldn’t help each other because of the situation.
After we got out, I could still see the old people who had been left behind by their families. They were in a sitting position. The men put on new clothes, hung belak on their necks and wore caibauk. The women had put on gold earrings and gold necklaces, prepared their kondé and wore black veils as if they were going to mass. We just looked at them but couldn’t do anything. The enemy was still after us.\textsuperscript{156}

Other testimonies

151. Many who were not killed directly from the bombs and bullets died from lack of food and medicine. The Commission received many testimonies describing death by deprivation during this time:

- One deponent, from Cailaco (Bobonaro), fled to the forest when Indonesian soldiers first came to Maganutu, Ritabo, very close to her village, in 1975\textsuperscript{1}. She fled with her father Lae Mau and they lived in a rocky cave in the forest for about a year. In 1977 they had to move again, so they fled to the sub-district of Maubara in Liquiça to the north. But there was not enough food. For three months they were attacked continually, so they returned to their home area. Her father died. He was sick and starving, and there was no medicine to help him. A month later she and other survivors surrendered.\textsuperscript{157}

- Duarte da Conceição lived in Ecinesi settlement, in Culuhun, Leotela (Liquiça, Liquiça). In 1978 he fled his home because the Indonesian military was increasing its attacks in the Liquiça area. He took his two younger sisters with him, Martina aged 11 and Marta aged seven. The three of them first went to Tambor, then to Goumaoloa. But it was not safe there, so they carried on to Darubutlao in Maubara (Liquiça) where they stayed two days. They kept moving and hid at Malael Bui for two days and two nights. They planned to go on to Cailaco (Bobonaro), but decided against it and went instead to Ulukole for two days. They returned to Darubutlao in Maubara for two weeks before moving to Saibaidere for a month and to Hatuhada Leten to stay with relatives. Finally they moved via Lukubui to Mate Hata, back in the sub-district of Liquiça. When they arrived, the two little girls died of starvation and illness.\textsuperscript{158}

- Most people witnessed the death of people close to them both before and after they surrendered. Alarico de Jesus, from Guda Tas, Guda (Lolotoe, Bobonaro), told the Commission that he fled with his community to Mount Sabi, just south of Guda Tas, when the Indonesian military attacked the neighbouring village of Deudet in 1978. On the mountain they were short of food and medicine, and six people in the group died. They were Martino de Jesus, Ilimau da Costa, Ilda da Costa, Agata da Costa, Aurelia da Costa, and João de Jesus. In 1979 their situation grew more difficult. Unable to plant gardens, the survivors surrendered in the aldeia of Raimea in Opa Village, near the town of Lolotoe. More people in the group died of hunger and disease including Francisco, Martina and Salvador Fraca.\textsuperscript{159}

152. Those who testified to the Commission of fleeing attacks by the Indonesian military described the attacks as if they were aimed at them, the civilian population, as well as Falintil troops. Witnesses described attacks that did not seem to distinguish between military and civilian targets.

\textsuperscript{1} Belak: crescent-shaped metal chest-ornament worn around the neck; caibauk: crescent-shape crown; kondé: A traditional way of styling hair by East Timorese women.

\textsuperscript{2} According to other information received by the Commission, the Indonesian military did not enter Cailaco until June 1976 [CAVR Interview with Adriano João, Dili, 21 September 2004].
153. At the same time, the Fretilin strategy of having civilians living with soldiers exposed those non-combatants to Indonesian attacks on Falintil. Fretilin eventually allowed civilians to surrender but only after Indonesia had unleashed the full weight of its military resources against them. Fretilin's earlier decision to prevent people wanting to surrender from doing so undoubtedly put them at greater risk of exposing them to attack by Indonesian forces.

154. However, while it is clear that some who wanted to surrender were prevented from doing so it is less clear how many actually wanted to surrender.

155. According to Jacinto Alves, the thinking of the Central Committee on the issue of whether the population should surrender began to change once the "encirclement and annihilation" campaign began in late 1977. At that time it was announced to the people that women, men over 56 years old and children under 18 years old could surrender. Jacinto Alves told the Commission about the reaction to this announcement in his area of Manatuto, where a group of 40,000 were then coming under heavy bombardomcnt:

> We were being attacked from all sides by TNI Infantry, including bombing from planes and mortar every day...Apart from that we did not have food. We did not have anything, but the population did not want to give up. The discipline among the 40,000 people was very high. There was an order to cook only in the evening until 3.00 in the morning. After that nobody was allowed to light a fire as it could attract the attention of the planes. Everyone kept strictly to this for three months. For three months we kept moving along the 40,000 people. And later we saw people could not walk because of hunger or age and they would look for a sheltered area in the caves and sit there, until they died. You would come round a second time and see corpses and then come round a third time and see more corpses, but still they did not want to surrender.¹⁵⁰

156. Moreover, when the order to surrender finally came, it was not always well received. Adriano João, a political assistant in the Sector Centro Norte in February 1979 described the reaction of the people to the order to surrender:

> On 16 February 1979 when we called the people together to tell them we were going to surrender, they were all angry. The people and Falintil felt disappointed and angry. They pointed their weapons at us. They rebuked us: “It was you who taught us to continue the struggle till death. Now all of a sudden you tell us you are going to surrender.” We informed them a thousand and one times, patiently and courteously: “The leaders in Fatubesi have all surrendered. If we don’t surrender, we’ll all die in the forest from the enemy’s attacks and hunger.” Fortunately Rui Fernandes [the former adjunto in the base de apoio, who had already surrendered with most of the other leaders] had sent a letter which had been delivered to us by João Freitas Maria, a platoon commander who had already surrendered. I read out the letter. They saw his [Rui Fernandes’s] signature, and they agreed [to surrender]. But they said to us: “all our suffering at the hands of the enemy will be on your shoulders”.¹⁶¹
On the run in Catrai Leten and Lesemau (Ermera)

Agustino Soares was a young man of 17 when Indonesian soldiers reached Letefoho (Ermera). He told the Commission how he and his family ran from Letefoho to Catrai Leten (Letefoho, Ermera) where they lived with thousands of other displaced people for two years. In 1978 this Resistance base was destroyed, forcing him to go on the run until he finally surrendered in Letefoho Town. He told the Commission:

*Indonesian [forces] entered Letefoho on 3 May 1976. [ABRI] Battalion 512 came from the direction of Mount Baumalaria. After they entered Letefoho, the situation got worse. They attacked and killed, and also conducted operations in the villages to capture people. People became terrified and suffered trauma. Most people evacuated to the forest, including my family and I.*

*I was 17 years old at that time. We lived in Catrai Leten at the foot of Mount Ramelau. There were ten others in the family. Thousands of people were concentrated in Catrai Leten. They were from Letefoho, Ermera, Ainaro, Aileu and Cailaco (Ermera). Catrai Leten was a Fretilin stronghold, so we were quite secure. Fretilin troops guarded us from the front, while at the rear we grew crops. Initially we had enough food. No people died of starvation or illness.*

*About two years later Indonesian forces moved into the territory of Catrai Leten. Indonesian troops came from Atsabe, Ainaro, Same and Bobonaro. They encircled Catrai Leten. We were surrounded and they fired on us with mortars, bazookas and cannons. Their planes bombarded us from the air. The bombs didn’t burn people, but the landmines killed many. The attack on 18 May 1978 destroyed the base at Catrai Leten where we were concentrated. My family and I managed to escape from the encirclement with some others, although ABRI blocked all the exit routes. Those who didn’t manage to escape were captured by Indonesian forces and taken to Letefoho Town, while we fled to the area of Lesemau.*

*In Lesemau we couldn’t plant crops because the enemy was always harrassing us. We found it very difficult to get food supplies and many people started dying of starvation. I estimate about ten to 11 people were dying of starvation every day. Their bodies were left on the ground. When we went out at night to search for food, we would accidentally step on dead bodies. Left and right, one or two bodies would be lying around. In this precarious situation, we survived by changing our eating pattern. We tried to eat only once a day and drank a lot of water, to keep our stomachs full. We cooked by mixing different kinds of food. We took just a few corn kernels and mixed them with herbs and vegetables from the forest like ortalan tahan [mint leaves] and angria [water salad]. This is what we ate to survive.*

*Lesemau was attacked by the Indonesians again. Smoke was visible to enemy planes from people’s cooking fires and our defence base was bombarded. But this time it wasn’t bombs they dropped but poison mixed with water, which they poured from the air. This toxic bombing contaminated all our food supplies. If people collected wild leaves to eat, when they cooked and ate them, they died. They also died from drinking the water. They even died when they ate cooked tubers, which had been dug from 15 centimetres under the ground. Around 400 people died as a result of the toxic bombing, mostly people from the aldeia of Catrai Kraik. The whole aldeia died. The only survivors were a woman and her granddaughter. They are still living in Catrai Kraik.*
After the [toxic] bombing we moved again, from Lesemau to Hatulete [Catrai Kraik], once we were in Hatulete, we began to cook taro leaves, but before we had a chance to eat them we were captured by Battalion 512 and Hansip. We were beaten and taken to Letefoho Town and put in a concentration camp where we stayed for one month. We experienced much suffering from lack of food and medicine, torture and interrogations. I couldn’t stand it so I fled to the forest and lived in Catrai Leten. But they captured me again in March 1978 and I was taken back to Letefoho Town.\textsuperscript{162}

Surrender, camps and famine (1978-1981)

157. Testimony to the Commission shows that the Indonesian military operations between 1977 and 1978 to bring the areas not yet subjugated to Indonesian control made survival for the people living in those places impossible. Surrender or death in the mountains became the only options for most people. Whether in small groups moving from place to place trying to avoid the attacks, or in large concentrations surrounded and under heavy bombardment, most of those who survived ended up either surrendering or being captured.

158. The Fretilin policy of opposing surrender of civilians living in Resistance bases eventually became unviable. The civilians were in grave danger; they could no longer be protected or supported by the Resistance. Their presence put Falintil’s dwindling force at risk of total annihilation. According to testimonies received by the Commission, at a meeting in Werou from 20 to 28 November, in a major shift of policy, the Fretilin Central Committee (CCF) decided that civilians should be encouraged to surrender. Fretilin/Falintil would continue to fight but would change its strategy from conventional war to guerrilla warfare.\textsuperscript{163} The Fretilin leadership believed that people were more likely to survive if they surrendered and hoped that these people would become a source of support, food and information from inside Indonesian-controlled areas.

159. Taur Matan Ruak, then a company commander, described this policy change to the Commission:

\begin{quote}
Many of the bases had already fallen, many of the population had surrendered and many of the leaders were dead. Our forces were dispersed and, many of them had also surrendered. Then the decision was taken to change the campaign. Although we were surrounded by the enemy, it was decided to give the order to continue the campaign and get away from the base area. First the population who wanted to surrender should surrender, but guided by the following idea: “Whether in the rice field, in the corn field, whether in the town or the countryside, everyone should continue the struggle for independence according to their capabilities.”\textsuperscript{164}
\end{quote}

160. Marito Nicolau dos Reis, then a political assistant in the Uaimori base, described how he explained the policy change to civilians in the base:
At the time many people came down and surrendered or were captured. It had become physically impossible to live in the forest. I told them: “Before I told you to leave the town, now I’m telling you to go back. If you still want to fight, you don’t have to do it by staying here. You can do it from inside the town. You don’t have to use weapons in the town. That is why you have to grow crops…and guard them well from the monkeys and the pigs, so you can give some of your crops to [Falintil]. If you want, you can give rice to Falintil. You will not be bothered by the army, so you can use the crops from the harvest…This is a useful way, you can go down…so we can prolong this war”. After the meeting…many came down.  

The surrenders: distribution and numbers

161. It is difficult to calculate the number of people who moved into Indonesian-controlled camps after surrender or capture. A detailed study of this question not long after the events, drawing on reports and population counts from Indonesian Government and international aid agency sources as well as Indonesian and East Timorese Church sources, concluded that between 300,000 and 400,000 displaced people came under Indonesian control between early 1977 and early 1978.  

162. The evidence of witness statements to the Commission suggests that the surrender or capture of the population occurred at different times in different parts of Timor-Leste. Figures compiled by the Indonesian police in June 1978 showing the population under Indonesian control in each district between October 1977 and May 1978 provides some empirical confirmation of this testimony (see Table 5 Indonesian police data on population, October 1977-May 1978, below).

Table 5 - Indonesian police data on population, October 1977 to May 1978

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Population of East Timor Pre-upheaval</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oct 77</td>
<td>Nov 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>28,149</td>
<td>35,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baucau</td>
<td>84,626</td>
<td>31,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lospalos (ie Lautém)</td>
<td>38,797</td>
<td>11,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viqueque</td>
<td>62,685</td>
<td>12,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manatuto</td>
<td>35,885</td>
<td>12,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aileu</td>
<td>33,033</td>
<td>1,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ainaro</td>
<td>49,644</td>
<td>22,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same (ie Manufahi)</td>
<td>35,327</td>
<td>6,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suai</td>
<td>40,655</td>
<td>19,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maliana (ie Bobonaro)</td>
<td>75,159</td>
<td>59,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>70,294</td>
<td>47,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquiça</td>
<td>49,798</td>
<td>6,105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
163. While these figures must be treated with caution, they give some indication of the increase in the number of people under direct Indonesian control during this period—about 60,000. It seems reasonable to attribute these increases to surrenders because most of them occurred in short periods of time in particular districts: Ainaro (November 1977), Manufahi (October-December 1977), Covalima (October 1977-January 1978), Bobonaro (May 1978) and Dili (October 1977 and May 1978). Moreover, the timing of the increases in population in particular districts shown in the table is more or less consistent with what is known about surrenders during this period.

164. When compared with pre-invasion figures, the relatively small number of people under Indonesian control in the eastern districts of Viqueque, Lautém and, to a lesser extent, Baucau is notable. This is consistent with the fact that large numbers of surrenders in these districts did not occur until the second half of 1978 (that is, after the period covered by the table).

165. The May 1978 figures for the western districts of Bobonaro and Covalima, and the central district of Ainaro, are similar to numbers recorded in the 1980 Indonesian official census. This suggests a relatively stable population in these districts from mid-1978, with few surrenders after that time. Conversely, a comparison of the figures for many of the central and all of the eastern districts from Table 5 and the 1980 census suggests that large numbers of people were still outside Indonesian control in these areas in mid-1978. A simple comparison of the total population counts in the 1978 police figures and the 1980 census suggests that the number of people outside Indonesian control in mid-1978, across all districts, was in the order of 200,000 people (May 1978: 362,886; 1980: 555,350), but is likely to have been higher.

166. In summary the Indonesian military campaigns in 1977 and 1978 resulted in ever-increasing Indonesian control of the population. Surrenders happened in waves over many months in different areas. Each new military operation caused people to surrender while others moved away to avoid surrender. Sometimes people who had already surrendered returned to the mountains.

167. Large-scale influxes of people into Indonesian-controlled centres continued until the end of 1978. Indonesian army figures, cited by an Indonesian priest who visited Timor-Leste in early 1979, indicated some 320,000 “refugees” had moved from the interior by early December 1978. Reports from church and diplomatic sources at the time indicate that this flow slowed to a trickle during the first half of 1979.

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1 The Commission does not know how these figures were arrived at; identical numbers across several months in some districts render their month-to-month accuracy suspect; the very low numbers for the districts of Aileu and Liquiça beg an explanation.
2 The simple comparison between the 1978 and 1980 population counts probably underestimates the number of people outside Indonesian control for two reasons. First the evidence before the Commission shows that the death rate in Timor-Leste due to killings, sickness and starvation was very high from mid-1978 to late 1979. This high death rate means that the number of people still outside Indonesian control in mid-1978 was considerably, but incalculably, greater than 200,000. Second there are strong grounds for thinking that the 1980 census underestimated the actual population in that year [see Part 6: Profile of Human Rights Violations].
Life and death in Indonesian-controlled camps

168. East Timorese people who surrendered or were captured were typically held for extended periods in a succession of population-control centres often called "concentration camps" by local people. On surrender people were often held for relatively short periods in transit camps, which commonly doubled as military bases, specifically for the purpose of separating those with leadership positions in Freti or Falintil and Falintil soldiers from the mass of the civilian population. This process also took place in the so-called resettlement camps and relocation villages where the surrendering population could be kept under various forms of restriction for several years.

169. Security considerations and the achievement of military objectives, not the welfare of the people held in them, were the priorities of the Indonesian military in these camps. Any hope or expectation that the civilian population could be saved from death by surrendering proved false. Evidence gathered by the Commission shows that the Indonesian military failed to guarantee the basic needs of those who did surrender, many of whom were seriously hungry and weak when they surrendered, and that without access to adequate shelter, food, clean water and medical care in the army-controlled camps, thousands died.

Transit camps

170. After surrender or capture, people were first placed in transit camps. Usually established at or near an Indonesian army encampment, transit camps were located in the countryside and in sub-district capitals. While the Commission was not able to compile a complete list, there were dozens of these transit camps in Timor-Leste in the period 1977-1979. Each new major Indonesian military operation would be marked by the creation of new transit camps. Once established, they were maintained for as long as a year and people continued to brought into them, replacing others who had been moved elsewhere.

Hunger and death

171. There was little preparation by the Indonesian authorities to house and care for the vast influx of displaced people, most of whom were weak and severely malnourished. Some could barely walk and were described by observers as “walking skeletons”. Gilman dos Santos, then working for US Catholic Relief Services (CRS), told the Commission of the terrible condition of those who came down from the mountains to surrender:

In 1978 the food situation in the forest got more difficult because the Indonesian military controlled more of the territory, right down to the remote villages. This food problem was confirmed by the state of those who came down from the mountains. They were very thin and sick…The Indonesians made minimal effort to help relieve this situation…What I am trying to say is that most people in the camps who were sick died.

172. Emergency barracks were hastily constructed from palm thatch, but sanitary facilities were non-existent. On arrival in the camps people were usually given a small amount of food. In many cases this food was inappropriate for the severely malnourished with the result that many of those who ate it died. Such deaths led to the widespread belief that people were being poisoned

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*The term was often used in witness testimonies to the Commission. Freti radio broadcasts from Timor-Leste in 1977 and 1978 also used this phrase to describe places where the captured population was held [see for example summary of Radio Maubere message 10 July 1977, in Timor Information Service, No.22, December 1977, p.4; Radio Maubere broadcast, 14 May 1978, in Timor Information Service, No.26, August 1978, p.18].
by the military. Witness testimonies suggest that the amount of food available was generally vastly insufficient. The ration for a whole family for a week was often one or two *rantang* (meal tins), only enough to provide one person with one or two meals. Growing or searching for additional food was not possible because of restrictions on movement away from the camps and the extreme physical weakness of the inhabitants. As a result many died of hunger while under Indonesian control in these camps.

173. Father Eligio Locatelli has been living at the Salesian technical college at Fatumaca, Gariuai (Baucau, Baucau) since Portuguese colonial times. He told the Commission:

> People came down from the mountains to surrender between 1978 and 1982. In the beginning they had to stay for three months at ABRI surrender posts in Baucau and Uailili. After three months, they were allowed to return to their homes, but not too far from the roadside. These surrender posts were in use for one year. They [the people] were kept under close watch and were confined to a specified area. They weren’t allowed to look for food and clean water.

> They were given assistance by the soldiers. But they received food only once a day, usually salted dried fish and mouldy corn. If they wanted to go out to look for food, [they] have to get permission…[from]…the Village Chief, Sub-district Administrator, the Koramil and the Kodim. Even with this letter people were still afraid. Going out meant risking death, but if they accepted their confinement, [they] would also die. Many people died.\(^{172}\)
Capture: the people of Vemasse under Indonesian Army control

When Uaimori’s defences collapsed in 1978, people moved in stages to the Natarbora Plain on the south coast of Manatuto. Many people died during the journey from Uaimori to Natarbora, and many more died under the Indonesian bombardment of the Resistance base in Natarbora. A group of those who escaped the Indonesian encirclement in Natarbora managed to get as far as Ossoala (Vemasse, Baucau) where they were captured by Indonesian troops. Cosme Freitas gave an account of their treatment after capture to the Commission:

In 1978, ABRI and Hansip captured around 120 of us in Ossoala. They took us to Venilale [Baucau] and then ordered us to walk from there to the village of Bucoli [Baucau]. It took us more than two days. During our three months at the Bucoli concentration camp, we faced many difficulties. We weren’t allowed outside the camp to look for food and clean water, or to bathe. We were forced to just sit there [in the camp].

Because of ABRI’s restrictions, we were badly undernourished, as we weren’t given the chance to go outside to look for food. We were given only mouldy corn by ABRI, three meal tins (rantang) per family per week. But we finished all three sets of rotten corn in just one day. When the rotten corn was finished, we didn’t have any more food. So we had to wait another week for more rations. That caused many deaths due to starvation in the concentration camp. Between 1 to 3 people died every day. The dead were buried by their families not far from where they were staying. Those who ate the corn were struck down with beri-beri and cholera. I estimate that around 2 to 4 people died every day from those diseases, sometimes even more. Most of them were children and the elderly.

After three months the Indonesian army began to move us from Bucoli to Vemasse. When we arrived in Vemasse the army dropped us off in front of the Vemasse Church. They told us to stay in the church. We stayed in there for about two weeks before we were allowed to move back to our homes.

Back in our homes, we didn’t receive any help whatsoever from the local government of Baucau, ABRI, the Church or the international agencies. We suffered severe hunger. Since we had just moved back to Vemasse, we hadn’t had time to plant crops. Many people starved, some even died as a result. To survive, when there was no food, the people of Vemasse went to pick young vine leaves, which were then cooked for the whole family. This went on for around two weeks, causing many to suffer from beri-beri, cholera and vomiting. It was not just that people got sick, many of them died. I estimate that around 10 to 11 people were dying of disease daily, mostly the elderly and children. So the number of people who died during the period of those two weeks was estimated at around 150 people.

Only in 1981 did we receive assistance from CRS. They handed out rice, corn, mung beans, corn starch, medicine, clothes, and soap, so our lives became a bit better. The [Indonesian] army was just beginning to give us freedom to go outside to plant crops or work the rice fields, so the number of people dying from lack of food decreased.

Registration, interrogation, execution and control

174. Civilians who surrendered were usually held in transit camps for several weeks where, on arrival, they were registered and interrogated. Interrogations were designed to identify any Resistance members and to gain information about the Resistance still in the mountains. Those believed to be Fretilin or Falintil were sometimes immediately executed. Others were interrogated and tortured for an extended time before being executed. The screening process appears to have been formally the responsibility of a branch of the military command called the Komando Taktis (Kotis), but testimony given to the Commission indicates that troops belonging to almost any military unit—a district or sub-district command (Kodim or Koramil), a combat battalion or Special
Forces (Kopassandha)—might in fact carry out the screening process assisted by East Timorese. Some people were taken to detention centres elsewhere for interrogation by other intelligence agencies. Many were executed. Some people were allowed to move to resettlement camps with the other civilians (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances; and Chapter 7.4 Detention, Torture and Ill-treatment).

175. Some civilians or Resistance members who surrendered were forced to return to the mountains to persuade relatives or comrades to give themselves up. They faced the danger of being killed by Falintil as possible spies, or by ABRI if they failed in their mission. Moises da Costa related to the Commission how his family had fled in 1978 to We Alas [Alas, Manufahi] and then to Kokolau (also in Alas), before his father was captured and taken to the Uma Metan surrender camp. His father was forced to return to Kokolau to persuade his family to surrender, but was killed by Falintil as a suspected spy. The wife of Francisco Ximenes (Amelia do Rego) told the Commission how soon after she and her husband had come down from the mountains, the commander of Airborne Infantry Batallion 100, F55, came to their house in Caicasa, (Fatuberliu) and ordered Francisco to go to the forest to look for his former comrades. On his return, he said that he had not been able to find any of them. Members of Airborne Infantry Batallion 100 tied him up and beat him until he lost consciousness, and then shot him dead.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obligations under human rights law and the laws of war</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human rights law, which is applicable both in times of peace and in situations of armed conflict, also provides important protection to internally displaced persons (IDPs). It aims both to prevent displacement and to ensure basic rights should it occur. The right to personal safety and to a home, as well as the rights to food, shelter, education and access to work, offer vital protection to persons who have been displaced.</td>
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<td>If the civilian population lacks supplies essential to its survival, parties to conflict have the duty to accept exclusively humanitarian, impartial and non-discriminatory relief operations on its behalf (Geneva Convention IV, Articles 38 and 59; Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Article 70; Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, Article 18).</td>
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Transit camps: detailed data received by the Commission

176. Tomé da Costa Magalhães vividly described his experiences in a notorious transit and resettlement camp called Uma Metan (Black House) in Alas, Manufahi:
We lived in Uma Metan for three months. I saw a large concentration of civilians there, around 8,000 of them. They came from Aileu, Maubisse, Same, Ainaro, Manatuto, Dili, Liquiça and Viqueque. They suffered greatly due to starvation, illness and lack of clothing. For the three months I was there, we weren’t allowed to go further than one to two kilometres [from the camp]. If we did, they would suspect us of making contact with Fretilin. In Uma Metan there was no drinking water. The water source was far, about 500 metres from the camp. If we wanted to get water we had to be escorted by Hansip or soldiers, and only the strong could do the round trip. The weak ones would die along the way and were just left there on the slopes. We were given food, but only one small can of corn per person per week. We could cook only a handful every two days. Because of that, many couldn’t endure the hunger and eventually between five and six people died each day due to hunger. Those who did eat the stale corn got sick with various illnesses such as swollen feet and hands, stomach pain and tuberculosis. Once they fell ill, they would soon die. The soldiers did not give medication to those who were sick and dying. Only the really lucky survived. The soldiers intentionally punished people day and night, and didn’t allow them to go out to look for food, get water or collect firewood. Because the soldiers also did not give food to people or treat the sick, up to 40 people a week died of hunger, thirst and disease.  

177. Some reports to the Commission of life in the camps immediately after surrender follow.*

Bagua (Baucau)

178. After the assault on Mount Matebian on 24 November 1978 thousands of people began to come down into the town of Bagua (Bagua, Baucau). Those who surrendered in Bagua included people from Iliiomar, Lospalos, Luro, Tutuala, (all in Lautém), from Laga and Baucau (in Baucau) and from Viqueque District, as well as people from Bagua Sub-district. When they arrived in Bagua Town, the only shelter they could find was under trees and bushes. They were not allowed to go beyond a fixed distance from the town and were tightly guarded. These conditions and the sheer number of people concentrated in the town made the already debilitated inhabitants prey to infectious diseases, such as cholera, diarrhoea and tuberculosis. The result, according to one community that surrendered in Bagua, was that around 500 people from their village alone died there.  

179. People who had held any leadership position in the forest were targeted for punishment, including execution. Around 475 people from the sub-district of Bagua were detained and tortured during interrogation. Those who were released had to report to the authorities as often as twice a day, and perform night watch and forced labour, including as TBOs. All the executions recalled by communities in discussions with the Commission were committed by members of Kopassandha (Special Forces) and Battalion 745.  

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* Other transit camps known to the Commission include camps in Com (Lautém), Laga (Baucau), Beaço (Viqueque), Zumalai (Ainaro), Laclubar (Manatuto).
180. People who originally came from the sub-district of Iliomar (Lautém) told the Commission they went down the south-east side of the mountain and on 28 November they met Indonesian troops. These troops took them to their military base in Baguia, where they interrogated everyone. After a week those among the group from Iliomar who had not been identified as Fretilin leaders were told to go back to Iliomar. Fretilin leaders were kept in Baguia where they were tortured and some were executed.  

Oso-leru (Quelicai, Baucau)

181. Until ABRI captured it in November 1978, the temporary transit camp at Oso-leru had been a Resistance base on Mount Matebian. The Indonesian military separated Falintil fighters from the general population and many of them later disappeared (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances). They gave some food to the people in the transit camp but it was insufficient. The Indonesian authorities had not made preparations for such a large number of people and people continued to die of starvation. Their stay in this place was short as the military soon took them to larger centres such as the one in the town of Quelicai (Quelicai, Baucau).  

Uatu-Lari Town (Uatu-Lari, Viqueque)

182. Uatu-Lari (Viqueque) was used as a transit camp for some time. People who surrendered in Uatu-Lari also experienced famine. Every day people died there. Two weeks after most people came into Uatu-Lari from Mount Matebian in November 1978, the Indonesian military and members of Hansip moved them by foot or truck to a resettlement camp in Viqueque.  

Lacluta (Viqueque)

183. People from Barique (Manatuto), Fatuberliu (Manufahi), Laleia (Manatuto), Ossu (Viqueque), Venilale (Baucau), Vemasse (Baucau), Manatuto, Dili, Maubisse (Ainaro), Viqueque and Natarbora (Manatuto) surrendered in Lacluta, where they suffered from lack of food, clean water and medical care. In his testimony, Antonio Vicente Marques Soares stated that more than ten people died there each day, mainly children and older people. Restrictions on civilians in the camps made it difficult to plant crops, fetch clean water or conduct other activities on which their survival depended.  

Parlemento (Moro, Lautém)

184. The people of Com and Asailano surrendered to Battalion 512 in 1977. Immediately after surrender they were concentrated on the beach at Com for one week. They were then moved to Parlemento to join other civilians who had surrendered from the all over the district of Lautém. Life was very difficult in the transit camp, with restrictions preventing movement further than 100 metres from the camp. This meant that the 2,000 people living in the Parlemento camp were extremely hungry, as no food was provided by their Indonesian military captors. A survivor told the Commission that between two and five people died each day at the camp. When an Indonesian naval ship landed at the Lautém port, some men were able to work as labourers, receiving two tins of rice for each day of work.  

Railaco Town (Railaco, Ermera)

185. The transit camp at the town of Railaco (Railaco, Ermera) in late 1979 was one of the worst camps. It contained people who had held out with the Resistance in the mountains longer than most. Eufrázia de Jesus told the Commission she was captured on 13 October 1979 and held in the Railaco transit camp by Battalion 721 for several months. No foreign aid agency ever visited Railaco, and the internees who survived did so by gathering roots and leaves from around
the camp. Only once, more than two weeks after their capture, did the military give people a small amount of corn and salted fish. For those already badly malnourished, the fish caused diarrhoea which often proved fatal. Every day up to ten children and old people died.  

*Fatubessi (Hatulia, Ermera)*

186. Fatubessi was a Resistance base from 1976 until Indonesian forces captured it in 1978. Gabriel Ximenes told the Commission he surrendered to Battalion 611. They placed him in the transit camp at Fatubessi. The people were very hungry. The military gave them some food, but it was insufficient and was not distributed to everyone. Gabriel Ximenes said that conditions were worse in the Fatubessi transit camp than they had been just before surrender. After a month the military moved him and his group to a resettlement camp in the town of Ermera. There they were kept under tight restrictions which prevented them from planting food. Death due to starvation continued.  

*Uma Metan and Lebos (Alas, Manufahi)*

187. Uma Metan and Lebos were two important transit camps near the town of Alas in Manufahi. They were established as a base for operations against the Resistance in the mountains around Manufahi. Many ABRI units were based there, including troops from Airborne Infantry Battalion 700, Battalions 745 and 310, and Kopassandha (Special Forces). It was also the headquarters of a Sub-district territorial command (Koramil) and local Hansip. In August 1978 Uma Metan started to receive people who had surrendered or been captured. People who had surrendered in Alas, Same, Fatuberliu, Turiscal (all in Manufahi), Maubisse (Ainaro), Aileu, Soibada (Manatuto) and Natarbora (Manatuto) were brought there, and at its peak of more than 8,000 people were living there. Many of the people held in Uma Metan continued to be held there rather than resettled elsewhere. Soldiers ordered the inmates to build a village hall and a school. The school was ostensibly built so that the soldiers could teach the Indonesian language to the camp’s inhabitants. In fact only young women could attend the “school”, which became notorious as an ABRI rape centre. The military did not permit the detainees to go outside the camp to make gardens or look for food, and although the Church organised some food assistance for the detainees it was not sufficient. Many people died of starvation and illnesses like diarrhoea and beri-beri. Others were executed for their involvement in the Resistance (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances). According to local leaders, some 2,000 people are buried in mass graves at the Uma Metan camp site.  

*Fahinehan (Fatuberliu, Manufahi)*

188. In 1978 the people of Fahinehan, Bubususu and Caicasa (all in the sub-district of Manufahi, Manufahi) surrendered to Indonesian soldiers after the destruction of the *base de apoio* of the South Central Sector. They were taken first to the coastal areas of Kolokau, Besusu and Dolok in Manufahi. They were then concentrated in the village of Fahinehan, under the control of Indonesian soldiers from Airborne Infantry Battalion 100. According to Eleajáro Teófilo, larger numbers of people died after the surrender from lack of food and medicine than had been dying in the forest:

> There were days when up to ten people. There was no humanitarian aid. ABRI allowed us to look for food only if we were accompanied by soldiers or Hansip. We were not allowed to move further than 1 kilometre [from Fahinehan], or go anywhere where they could not see us. Two men were killed for going further.  

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189. Between 1981 and 1983 the people of these three villages were moved twice. Each move created problems in food and security (See below).

Turiscai Town (Turiscai, Manufahi)

190. The town of Turiscai was also used as a transit camp for people who had been living in the base de apoio of the South Central Sector. Those confined included both people from the 11 villages nearby such as Foholau, Caicasa and Bubususu (in Fatuberliu) and from more distant places such as Maubisse (Ainaro) and Dili. According to witness testimony, the Indonesian military distributed food only once - each family received three tins of rice when they arrived at the camp. Tomás Barbosa told the Commission:

*The soldiers told us to look for arms in the forest. They said those who come with weapons would get one more extra tin of corn, and those who failed to bring back any weapons would not get any more food.*

191. Witnesses told the Commission that many people died during this time. The people were made to build their own make-shift houses and, eventually, were able to cultivate their own food. The situation improved when the ICRC began to provide humanitarian aid. Four or five years after they surrendered, the people were allowed to return to their own villages.

Metinaro Town (Metinaro, Dili)

192. A large combined Indonesian military operation was conducted in the Metinaro area (Hatu Konan, Laclo) in the middle of 1978. The military brought people whom they captured into the Metinaro transit camp. For example, Battalion 315 captured Manuel Carceres da Costa in the sub-district of Laclo (Manatuto) in July 1978 (see box above). They held him and other prisoners at the battalion command post in Ilimano (Umakaduak, Laclo, Manatuto) for one day of interrogation. After that, the military sent them to Metinaro (Dili). The camp was surrounded by military posts. No one could move out; everyone was registered and they had to stay there. Death from famine ravaged the population held there. Metinaro then became a resettlement camp and people lived there for a year.

193. The investigation process for leaders or people thought to have information that could be useful to the Indonesian military was different. Jacinto Alves, who had been concurrently an assistant to the Falintil General Chief of Staff and was private secretary to Nicolau Lobato in the latter’s capacity as political commissar to the General Staff. He was interrogated immediately after capture. They asked him what position he had held in the forest, what was Falintil’s strength and where the leaders were. He said that he had worked in the logistics section of Falintil, but then they told him that they had found his bag with a diary, a pistol and a book called *Contemporary Capitalism* in it. On the basis of the book they called him a communist and on the basis of the pistol they said he must be a leader. In Metinaro he was brought to the commander of Battalion 144, a red beret (Kopassus) who was also the Kotis commander, and other officers. He was handed over to the chief of military intelligence, Major Ganap, for further interrogation. After three months in Metinaro he was allowed to go home to Dili, but there he was required to report daily at the Sang Thai Hoo centre for further interrogation.
In a discussion with the Commission, members of the community of Ahic (Viqueque) recalled their experience of surrender and their struggle for survival:

In 1979 we surrendered in the Lalcuta Old Town. About 500 people died from hunger and lack of medicine to treat tuberculosis, marasmus and diarrhoea. Many who died had no more family members to bury them. Some died in the camp and some died while they were out in the forest looking for food. We survived on foods such as:

- Sago made from Bebak palm
- Fruits from the rubber tree
- Guavas
- Leaves from the end of a coconut
- Maek (a tuber)
- Kuan (a small fibrous yam)
- Aidak (kind of lychee)
- Kangkung (green vegetable)
- Banana shoots
- Laho (mice)
- Samea (snakes)
- Manduku (frogs)

Horses were sold for only Rp1,000 and two meal-sized tins (rantang) of rice from the Hansip. Gold chains could be traded for 1 tin of rice.

In exchange for food, such as buffalo or deer meat, daughters could be forcibly married to Hansip and ABRI even though they were already legally married.

ABRI and the Sub-district administrator (camat) decided to move everyone from Lalcuta Old Town to the village of Dilor. In Dilor political leaders and Falintil members were tortured and killed. All men above 15 years old were required to report to the military post in the morning and evening, and do guard duty at night. If they did not comply, all their belongings were stolen and they could be tortured. This could involve being submerged in filthy water for three hours, made to walk on thorn bushes, standing on coals or be hung upside down. Women were frequently raped and forced to “marry” Hansip and soldiers without agreement from then or their families. Many children resulting from these forced marriages were left abandoned.

In 1979-1980 we received aid from the Indonesian Red Cross such as dried fish, chickens, milk, flour, salt, blankets and medicines and were treated by medical staff—one doctor and two nurses. However the food we received had too much protein for malnourished people to digest, and many died. We began to be allowed to garden, but only less than 1 kilometre from Dilor, and only with a travel permit from Chief of Security. There was frequent forced labour without pay. There was no education because there were no facilities or teachers. Schoolchildren were forcibly recruited as TBOs (tenaga bantuan operasi, operations assistants).
194. With the completion of registration and screening by the Indonesian military civilian detainees were settled in controlled population centres referred to as “places of settlement” (tempat pemukiman). In some cases these were located in the same place as the site where transit procedures had been carried out. They could also be in the detainees’ home village, in another, existing village that was not the detainees’ own or in a newly-created village. Security rather than welfare considerations determined which of these options applied in any particular instance. The resettlement camps became the homes for hundreds of thousands of East Timorese. Many of these camps also became the sites of catastrophic famine in 1978 and 1979.

195. The key characteristics of the resettlement camps have been well known internationally since the early 1980s. The camps were the central element of the strategy of the Indonesian military to control the population and isolate it from the East Timorese Resistance. Internees were tightly controlled and limited in the extent to which they could travel beyond the camps. The resulting lack of access to adequate agricultural land for food production resulted in widespread hunger and starvation. The camps were places of suspicion, fear and insecurity designed to control and crush nationalist sentiment among the East Timorese population. Despite official Indonesian claims to the contrary, they were never designed to assist the material development of the population.

Location of resettlement camps

196. The Commission has sought to identify all resettlement camps established in the late 1970s. Table 6: Resettlement camps in late 1979, shows a list of 139 known resettlement camps. The list was mostly derived from a crude map showing the locations where US CRS and the ICRC were distributing aid at the time. The Commission believes the actual number was greater than the 139 points shown on the map because it received evidence from other sources that some places identified on the map by a single dot had several camps: Ainaro, for example, had three camps.

197. All districts except Oecusse had resettlement camps. In each of the 12 districts where camps were located, almost every sub-district had at least one camp, some had as many as five and most had three or four. Many camps were temporary. Some such as Dataran Faebere (Iliomar, Lautém) were later closed down and the area left uninhabited. Quite a few were located in new settlements that had not existed in Portuguese colonial times.

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<th>District</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Letefoho Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railaco</td>
<td></td>
<td>Railaco &amp; others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lautém</td>
<td></td>
<td>Iliomar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dataran Faebere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Iliomar Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lautém Moro</td>
<td></td>
<td>Buihomau (Serelau)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Com</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Daudere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>Towns</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laivai (Ililai)</td>
<td>Lareta, Laren, Lautem, and Moro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lospalos</td>
<td>Lareta, Lospalos, Rasaf/ Bauro, and Fuluro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luro</td>
<td>Lareta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutuala</td>
<td>Mehara, Poros (Mehara), Tutuala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquica</td>
<td>Bazartete Town, Leorema, Raukasa (Lauhata), Tiba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquica</td>
<td>Caikaiko (Asumano), Dato (Liquica), Hatarlema (Hatuquisi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maubara</td>
<td>Irilo (Cuico), Lebemeta (Vaviquenia), Maubara Town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barique/ Natarbora</td>
<td>Barique Town, South of Barique (not on regular maps), Further south of Barique (not on regular maps), Tuqueti (Cribas), Umaboku</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacro</td>
<td>Behau (Umakaduak), Lacro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laclubar</td>
<td>Laclubar Town, Lafalama (Manelima), Lei (Orlam)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laleia</td>
<td>Laleia New Town (Lifau)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manatuto</td>
<td>Carlolo (Aites), Manatuto Town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soibada</td>
<td>Maun fahe/ (Teras), Soibada Town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufahi</td>
<td>Alas Town &amp; Uma Metan, Lebos, Besusu (Uma Berlock)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatuberliu</td>
<td>Fatuberliu/ Fahinehan, Welalu (Klakuk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Betano, Daisua, Holarua, Letefohi, Same Town, Babulu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turiscai</td>
<td>Turiscai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viqueque</td>
<td>Lacluta, Aimeta Hun (Dilor), Dilor, Lacluta Old Town, Uma Tolu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossu</td>
<td>Buanurak (Loi Huno), Builale and Kaiwatu, Loi Huno, Ossu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viqueque</td>
<td>Buicar (Lacluta Lama), Viqueque (Beloi &amp; others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uatu-Carbau</td>
<td>Irabin Letarea (Irabin de Cima), Uatu-Carbau Town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uatu-Lari</td>
<td>Afaloacl (Babulo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: interpreted from a map presented by US Ambassador Edward Masters at Hearing before the Sub-committee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 96th Congress, 1st session, 4 December 1979, p. 28.

Conditions in the resettlement camps

198. Testimonies received by the Commission supports the following conclusions about conditions in the resettlement camps:
In many cases resettlement camps in an existing town or village were in a distinct area within or were apart from the town. In Hatulia (Ermera), for example, the people who had recently surrendered from places outside the area were kept in a separate area called Modolaran.

In other cases no distinction was made between people who had lived in the village before it became the site of a resettlement camp and people resettled from outside the locality. In Iliomar (Lautém), for example, residents and internees alike were confined to a small area inside a ring of military posts.

Normal residents and internees alike were subject to a travel permit system (surat jalan) if they wanted to work in gardens outside the area of the resettlement camp. In this sense all East Timorese people held in camps were subject to the security function of resettlement.

There was no barbed wire. The real enclosure was the ring of military posts and a permit system that limited access to wild food and gardens and kept people hungry.

There were some differences in conditions for internees and those who surrendered early or never evacuated to the mountains. The latter had more access to land and better connections to authorities, making life somewhat easier.

The towns of Dili and Baucau were the only places where life approached normality for most people. Even here there were exceptions, for example the tightly controlled camps at Dili’s Municipal Market, Manleuana (near today’s airport) and West Beto in Comoro.

Most resettlement camps were maintained until about 1980 or 1981. However, many continued to exist until well into the 1980s. Moreover, after the dismantlement of a camp its inhabitants were often not allowed to return to their home villages. Instead many were forced to settle in newly created villages located in areas that were considered safe or had strategic value to the Indonesian military. If they did return to their villages they continued to live under various kinds of restriction that affected their mobility and where they were allowed to build their houses.

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**Life in Iliomar resettlement camp**

Fernando Amaral is a former head of the village of Faat in Iliomar (Lautém). He gave a detailed interview to the Commission describing the conditions of living under Indonesian military control in a camp in the town of Iliomar after the population surrendered from Mount Matebian in November 1978. The following is a summary and excerpts from this interview.

The people from Iliomar came down from Mount Matebian in November 1978. After the military interrogated them in the transit camp in Baguia, they told the people to walk back to the sub-district of Iliomar, where the military established a resettlement camp. As they walked, no one was escorting them and some escaped back into the mountains at this time. When the remainder arrived in the sub-district of Iliomar, the place was completely empty. The people decided they should stay near the sub-district office built by the Portuguese (the Posto). About 4,000 to 6,000 people stayed around the office building where they lived in temporary shelters. Some came from other places, such as Lospalos, Tutuala, and Uatu-Carbau. They did not run away because they were afraid of being caught by Indonesian soldiers. But they moved around freely looking for food. They took food from their old homes and brought it back.
Three weeks later ABRI soldiers from Battalion 328 and Hansip arrived in Iliomar. They immediately built six military posts around the population concentrated around the Posto. Two days later they told the people to register. They summoned the village chiefs from the six villages in the sub-district and ordered them to help them organise the people. Then they told the people to rebuild their shelters inside the ring of posts. They also ordered that no one could go more than 1 kilometre from the Posto, warning that anyone who broke the rule would be shot. Fernando Amaral said:

*We weren't allowed to visit our neighbours, or even to come out and work our fields...We tried to look for food for our own needs, but we were required to report daily to the soldiers or Hansip. And we weren't allowed to speak Portuguese.*

The people had just come down from Mount Matebian and were very weak and hungry. The soldiers gave them some corn, about three meal-sized tins a week per family. Although this was not nearly enough, the soldiers did not permit the people to make gardens for food. This rule very soon caused famine among the people at the Iliomar Posto. At first there were still coconuts in the trees, but with thousands of people picking them they were soon gone. People started eating wild roots and leaves. After that they cut the middle part out of banana trees, boiled and ate it, thus surviving on what was normally regarded as pig food. They suffered from diseases such as cholera and beri-beri, and people began to die every day.

The people begged the military for permission to go outside the resettlement camp. They asked the soldiers to send Hansip with them as guards, so they could go to their old homes and gather the food that was there. At their old homes there were edible tubers, coconuts, jackfruit, cassava, and edible leaves. ABRI eventually gave them permission to go, but before a person was allowed out the military wrote their name on a plywood board, which they had to wear around their necks. When they returned, they reported in by giving the board back. However, not long afterwards, 162 people ran away to the forest from the Iliomar camp, hoping to ease their hunger. After that the soldiers stopped giving permission for people to go out of Iliomar, and the hunger worsened again.

Fernando Amaral said that the 96 people who died from his village alone during the famine were buried at the three-way intersection at the entrance to Iliomar. Gaspar Seixas, who was the Deputy Sub-district administrator of Iliomar between 1979 and 1985, estimated that between 200 to 300 people died in Iliomar in 1978-80. Most were buried next to the old Portuguese school. Since then the families have exhumed the bones and reburied them.

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Mauchiga (Hatu Builico, Ainaro)

199. Mount Kablaki, which straddles the districts of Ainaro and Manufahi, was a major Resistance base. People fled there for safety in 1976 from towns and villages in the vicinity, including Same, Maubisse, Ainaro, and even from the sub-districts of Ermera and Atsabe in Ermera District. In September 1977 Indonesian forces, including Battalions 121, 521 and Airborne Infantry Battalion 100, attacked the base on the mountain and captured a large group of the people who had taken refuge there. Some of them came from the village of Mauchiga (Hatu Builico, Ainaro). The community of Mauchiga told the Commission of its experience on surrender to the Indonesian military. The military immediately sent these people back to Mauchiga to live. The people of Mauchiga found that Indonesian forces had destroyed their houses, killed their cattle, and stolen the gold ornaments from their homes. About two years later, in the middle of 1979, all but a few of those who remained on Mount Kablaki surrendered. Once more, those who came from Mauchiga were sent back home. They lived at Dare, on the Ainaro road. They could make gardens outside the settlement, but only with a permit from the military. Each time they wanted to go out they had to ask for a permit. If the military found anyone outside without a permit, they would punish them by placing them in water for a night or beating them. These
restrictions made it impossible to live a normal life, and the people suffered serious starvation until the ICRC food aid arrived in 1980.199

Hatulia, Ermera

200. The township of Hatulia (Hatulia, Ermera) was another resettlement camp. Idelfonso dos Reis told the Commission he surrendered to ABRI Battalion 507 on 20 July 1978, somewhere in the sub-district of Hatulia. The military took him and his group to the town of Hatulia and told them to live in the neighbourhood of Modolaran. The military gave them some corn, salted fish and salt. The salted fish gave people diarrhoea, from which many died. Old people and children were the most susceptible. For about a year conditions in the Modolaran camp were very bad for the 7,000 or so people who lived there. REF

201. Modolaran was surrounded by eight military posts. Nobody was allowed more than 100 metres from the camp. The internees asked the soldiers to accompany them to find food. Occasionally the soldiers gave permission and they went to a neighbouring village, Leimea Kraik or Samara, to look for edible root crops. Starvation in the Hatulia camp continued until 1979. Refugees from areas other than Hatulia, for example Zumalai (Covalima), appeared to suffer more fatalities than those from Hatulia. When the ICRC came with food aid at the end of 1979, the families received sufficient food and medical care to return them to good health. Not long afterwards, in 1980, the soldiers gave more freedom of movement to the internees. In the beginning they moved the internees to Leimea Kraik. Afterwards they gave them permission to leave and return to their homes. Many left for Ermera and Dili.200

Betano, Manufahi

202. Maria José da Costa told the Commission that in August 1978 Airborne Infantry Battalion 700 captured her and others in the area of Dolok (Alas, Manufahi). She was taken to Betano (Same, Manufahi), where the military gave them only a small, insufficient amount of food. People were allowed to make gardens, but within a limited area and not as the other side of the Caraulun River, 4 kilometres west of Betano. No one was allowed to go to their gardens outside limited times. These restrictions caused starvation and many people died. In Betano people lived under these conditions for five years, until 1983. After that the military allowed people to leave Betano. Maria José da Costa went to Same with her husband.201

Death in the resettlement camps

203. The physical condition of many arriving in transit camps was extremely poor. Minimal food provision, combined with restrictions on movement to seek or grow food and population densities swollen by outsiders and the confined space in which people were required to live, continued to apply in the resettlement camps. As the months went by, especially in 1978 and into 1979, the death toll reached horrendous proportions and continued at these levels until international humanitarian aid programmes began in late 1979.

204. Witness testimony already recounted here paints a picture of death from weakness, illness and starvation, as seen through the eyes of survivors in the camps. The Indonesian Jesuit priest Father Alex Dirdjasusanto, who visited various parts of the territory in early 1979, provided some independent insight into the death toll at the time. In early March he visited the town of Maubisse (Maubisse, Ainaro) and was invited four times in the course of one day to bury the dead. The catechist in Maubisse had recorded in his prayer book the deaths for 1979: January, 79; February, 101, first week of March, 26. In Turiscai (Manufahi) a week later Father Dirdjasusanto was told that the death toll had climbed steeply since 1977: 1977, six deaths; 1978, 164 deaths; 1 January to 13 March 1979, 120 deaths. He was also told that the death rate among “refugees” in the town of Ermera was about ten per day.202
205. Other independent testimony to the appalling physical conditions in the camps came from the visits to Timor-Leste in September 1978 of several foreign diplomats and journalists. In the company of Indonesia’s Foreign Minister, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, the visitors were reportedly shocked at the conditions they saw in a camp in Remexio (Aileu) where 4,000 people were held. A journalist was told of the deaths of thousands in the district and that worse was happening in camps elsewhere, including Suai (Covalima). Photographs of severely malnourished adults and children, taken by another journalist and published in newspapers around the world, provided incontrovertible evidence of the famine and of the urgent need for emergency relief.²⁰³

206. Data compiled by CRS provides further insight into the death toll in a few places before the international aid programmes began in Timor-Leste (see Table 7 below). While CRS disclaimed “scientific accuracy” for the data, they are broadly consistent with other material received by the Commission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Resettlement camp</th>
<th>Before aid (Jan-Jul 1979) (Ave monthly deaths)</th>
<th>After aid (Sep 1979-Jan 1980) (Ave monthly deaths)</th>
<th>June 1980 sub-district population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lautém</td>
<td>Lospalos</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lore</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lautém</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutuala</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luro</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iliomar</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baucau</td>
<td>Laga</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>Hatulia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letefoho</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>11,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Railaco</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

207. The data clearly show one thing—that international relief programmes were absolutely necessary to arrest the spiralling death toll in the resettlement camps of Timor-Leste.


208. The overwhelming memory East Timorese people have of life just before and after their capture or surrender is of hunger. All governments have an obligation under international law to provide humanitarian aid when it is needed, or to permit others to provide such aid. After the 1975 invasion the Government of Indonesia had these obligation towards people under its control in Timor-Leste. For people not under its control, those in Fretilin-controlled areas, the Government of Indonesia still had an obligation to permit others to provide aid. This section describes what the Commission has learned about the humanitarian aid effort.

209. In Timor-Leste Indonesian government policy on humanitarian relief was determined entirely by the military. Until September 1979 international relief agencies were unable to operate

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¹The Commission holds copies of these photographs, taken by Australian photographer Peter Rodgers, and has reproduced some in this report and other Commission publications.
² Derived from: CRS Indonesia, *Emergency assistance for East Timor (Phase I): Final Report*, 18 March 1980, p.8, CRS Submission to the CAVR, Annex 10. Note: only Columns 2-4 appear in the CRS report. The total surviving sub-district population in 1980, shown in Column 5, is given for comparison only. Most sub-districts had three or four camps. The population figures for 1980 for Lore and Lospalos, which are both in Lospalos Sub-district, have been combined.
in Timor-Leste. Up until late 1979 the Indonesian government did supply some aid to the camps under its control, but much less than was needed. The evidence for this can be seen in the rising death toll. Neither did the Indonesian Government allow aid to go to areas outside its control. Only from September 1979 did it permit two international aid agencies to conduct large emergency relief programmes in the territory.

**Before September 1979**

210. The Government of Indonesia made some provision to meet the needs of people in the camps before September 1979. Officially, it required that any aid from international sources be channelled through the government; Humanitarian relief was to be relayed to Timor via the Indonesian Red Cross as the responsible agency in the field.  

211. Several governments gave aid for Timor-Leste to the Indonesian Government, and which was then channelled through the Indonesian Red Cross. The Australian Government made cash donations in October and November 1976, and again in September 1978. The New Zealand Government did the same at the end of 1978.

212. World Vision Australia and the Australian Government sent a barge of food to Dili in January 1979. But the latter were not allowed to send monitors and they received no report on its distribution. This lack of accountability was a problem with all government-to-government aid for Timor Leste. The Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) reported that it had received several letters from Timor-Leste about the problem. One of them read:

Goods from the Australian Government-chartered barge *Alanna Fay*, which arrived in Dili in January 1979, and medicines flown in from New Zealand, were on sale at the Toko Vong Vung in Kampung Bairo Central in Dili and another shop, the Casa Vitoria.

**The Church**

213. The Indonesian Government did also permit some aid to come through the Catholic Church. The first Church food aid was organised by Bishop Antonius Pain Ratu SVD, from the Indonesian town of Atambua, through the Social Delegate (Delsos) of the Atambua Diocese. With the help of his order, the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), he obtained food from a German organisation interested in Timor and from US Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

214. Father Stanislaus Bessin, an SVD missionary in Atambua at the time, told the Commission that he helped prepare the first food aid shipment of 100 tons in April 1976. The Church did not deliver the aid directly to Timor-Leste, as the Indonesian military insisted that the Church surrender the truck to them. The military took the truck and promised to deliver the aid to those in need. Between December 1976 and March 1977 Father Bessin helped prepare more food aid for Timor-Leste. Using trucks rented from the military, the Church sent corn, beans, sago and rice twice a week. He was only permitted to accompany the cargo to the border town of Balibo (Bobonaro). After that the military took over the convoy, promising to deliver it. Father Bessin was unable to verify that the aid reached those in need and he feared much was corruptly used by the military. In June 1978 he asked the Governor of Timor-Leste to distribute the Church aid, but the Governor said all aid had to pass through the military.

215. One place that did receive Church assistance from Atambua was the town of Bobonaro, not far from the Indonesian border. As already noted above, Indonesian military restrictions on movement out of the town resulted in food shortages and hunger. Sister Consuela Martinez told the Commission she received food, clothing, blankets and medicines from the Atambua Delsos
from the end of 1976 until 1983. The Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah Indonesia) delivered the aid in trucks and she used it to feed between 120 and 180 children each day.208

216. Nevertheless, people continued to die due to hunger in Bobonaro. Sister Consuela was told by the Sub-district administrator that from the time of the surrender to the Indonesian military in February 1976 until early 1977, more than 200 people were dying each month. The number of deaths decreased slightly in early 1977 soon after the Delsos aid began arriving, but the aid was still not sufficient to reduce the death rate to a normal level. The number of deaths fell again only when direct international aid began to arrive in late 1979.209

217. The Jakarta Catholic organisation LPPS also directed financial assistance to Timor-Leste through its East Timor Emergency and Rehabilitation Programme, launched in September 1977. Initially led by Father Zeegwaard MSC, and working through the Timor Catholic Church’s Dili Delsos, LPPS continued to do its work quietly for many years.210

218. A report on this programme written in early 1979 said that some Rp110 million had been distributed in the programme’s first 18 months. This money from Church and charitable organisations in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, the US, Australia, Indonesia and the UK was used for emergency clothing, food and medicine, assistance for widows and orphans, housing, agriculture, cattle breeding and schools. The report also confirmed that the Indonesian authorities controlled the distribution of the aid. It noted that in early 1979 it was difficult to distribute aid because:

the local government wants to have a monopoly on this kind distribution of aid, for security and social considerations…[For this reason] a priest in one town is forbidden to buy rice or corn for distribution to the people.211

219. No foreign personnel involved with any of the Church programmes were permitted to visit Timor-Leste.212

Witness reports on Indonesian government aid

220. Many people told the Commission that immediately after surrender the Indonesian military gave them some food. Often it was dried fish, poor quality weevil-infested corn (jagung lapuk in Indonesian, batar fohuk in Tetum), sometimes with rice or corn flour. Every report to the Commission emphasised that the aid was not enough to sustain life. The report from Cosme Freitas of Vemasse (Baucau) is typical:

_We received only stale mouldy corn distributed by ABRI, three meal-sized tin-cans for one family for one week. We would consume all three cans of stale corn in just one day._213

221. Some more examples are given in the table below.
Table 8 - Food aid by ABRI in transit and resettlement camps, 1978

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Witness</th>
<th>Food aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Throughout</td>
<td>Bobonaro Town</td>
<td>Resettlement camp</td>
<td>Sister Consuela Martinez HC</td>
<td>A small amount of corn for each family as they surrendered, depending on the number of children. After that, the same amount every two weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After July</td>
<td>Modolaran, Hatulia Town, (Hatulia, Ermera)</td>
<td>Resettlement camp</td>
<td>Idelfonso dos Reis</td>
<td>One meal-sized tin of corn and one of salt fish per person per week. Eaten in three days. Assistance received only four times, then not again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After August</td>
<td>Uma Metan, Mahakida (Alas, Manufahi)</td>
<td>Transit camp</td>
<td>Tomé da Costa Magalhães; Mateus da Conceição</td>
<td>One small milk tin of corn per family per week. Eaten in two days and provided just once, then not again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Iliomar (Iliomar, Lautém)</td>
<td>Resettlement camp</td>
<td>Fernando Amoral</td>
<td>Three tins of corn per family per week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Fatubessi Town (Hatulia, Ermera)</td>
<td>Resettlement camp</td>
<td>Adriano Soares Lemos</td>
<td>One tin of corn and one tin of rice per family per week. Plus some salted fish and salt. Insufficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Railaco Town, Railaco Leten (Railaco, Ermera)</td>
<td>Transit camp</td>
<td>Eufrázia de Jesus Soares</td>
<td>Two small milk tins of corn and a tin of salt fish, once only, two weeks after capture. Caused protein shock deaths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

222. The Commission also heard that the food often caused diarrhoea. Idelfonso dos Reis said that many people died of diarrhoea in the Modolaran resettlement camp in Hatulia Town in mid-1978. Similar deaths occurred in Railaoco, Remexio and Aikurus from food aid eaten shortly after capture.214 Some people thought the food had been poisoned. On the balance of probability, the Commission believes that the victims suffered from protein shock. When a seriously malnourished person eats protein rich food, it can cause a severe reaction marked by chills, fever, bronchial spasms, acute emphysema, vomiting and diarrhoea. The fact that some people died in this way from eating the food they were given demonstrated further negligence by the institution administering the aid, namely the Indonesian military.215

After September 1979

223. Direct international aid began to flow to those in need in Timor-Leste from September 1979. By then the famine had been critical in parts of Timor-Leste for two years or more. The first question the Commission considers in this section is: Why did it take so long for international aid to arrive?

224. The answer to this question cannot be that Timor-Leste’s aid needs were not known.

225. US Catholic Relief Services (CRS) told the Commission that the top levels of its organisation had credible information about the suffering of the East Timorese people by April 1977. The CRS knew this from Father Lieshout in West Timor, who was managing CRS assistance for East Timorese refugees in West Timor. Father Lieshout’s information came from visits to Bishop Ribeiro in Dili.216 Father José Alvaro Nolasco Santimano Meneses e Monteiro of the Diocese of Dili told the Commission that he attended a meeting with foreign ambassadors in Jakarta in July 1977. He appealed to them for food aid for Timor-Leste.217 As already noted, on 6-7 September 1978 a delegation of 11 foreign ambassadors, accompanied by journalists, visited Dili, Baucau, Maliana (Bobonaro) and Remexio (Aileu). They were told that up to 125,000 people had come down from the mountains, and 20,000 to 30,000 of them were in an appalling condition, suffering from illnesses including cholera, malaria, tuberculosis and advanced
malnutrition. The ambassadors of Australia, Canada, the US and Japan called for an urgent international relief operation. World Vision Indonesia visited Timor-Leste in October 1978 and reported that 70,000 refugees were in desperate need and that most were malnourished women and children. One team member said about the children in Metinaro (Dili):

They were extremely thin; we could see the bones in their legs and arms; some were so weak they could not walk.\(^{218}\)

226. Clearly enough information about the humanitarian situation was available to Western and other governments and aid agencies for them to raise serious concerns about the situation for more than two years before a significant aid effort began.

**Access to Timor-Leste denied**

227. Some aid agencies did act on what they knew. CRS said that it had made regular requests to enter Timor-Leste during 1977 and 1978.\(^{219}\) Other agencies sent similar requests. Within the space of little over a year after the Indonesian invasion, Australia's umbrella organisation for NGOs engaged in aid and development work: ACFOA (The Australian Council for Overseas Aid), called five times for the ICRC and other agencies to be admitted to Timor-Leste. The ICRC itself negotiated continually with the government in Jakarta for access to Timor-Leste on acceptable terms. It wanted access to all parts of Timor-Leste, including Fretilin-held areas.\(^{220}\) The Government of Indonesia rejected all requests for access to Timor-Leste to assess needs and distribute aid.

228. However, in 1979 Indonesia changed its policy and agreed to admit the two international agencies, CRS and the ICRC. CRS attributes the shift in the Indonesian Government position to January 1979 when its executive director, Bishop Edwin B Broderick, received encouragement from the Indonesian Vice-President, Adam Malik, to institute an emergency relief programme. However, it was not until May 1979 that the Indonesian authorities gave CRS clearance to carry out an assessment of the situation on the ground. And despite the finding of CRS's assessment report that 200,000 people were seriously or critically malnourished, it was another four months before the relief programme was able to begin. By the time it did begin, in September 1979, the CRS estimated that the number of seriously or critically malnourished had risen to 300,000.

229. It was only in late 1978 and early 1979 that the situation changed drastically. A massive flow of sick and emaciated people came down from the mountainous interior regions of Timor-Leste and inundated the coastal settlements and villages.\(^{221}\)

230. In so far as it gives the impression that the situation had become critical only in late 1978, this is not an accurate depiction of the situation. East Timorese had been coming out of the forest and mountains in large numbers since at least late 1977 in the same emaciated condition as those who came down from Mount Mateban in late 1978: This is confirmed by a variety of sources ranging from the Indonesian Government itself, to various churchmen and women, to the ambassadors and journalists who visited Timor-Leste in September 1977 as previously described.

231. The Commission does not have privileged information about internal Indonesian Government and military decisions. However, the Commission believes that the more likely reason for the change in aid policy arose from the fact that the Indonesian military had by 1979 achieved its main military objectives: the destruction of the last major Resistance base on Mount Mateban; the significant weakening of the organised armed resistance; and the control of the bulk of the population.

232. The Commission concludes that before these objectives had been achieved, the Indonesian military saw international humanitarian aid as a potential barrier to defeating the Resistance and, especially, forcing the desperately hungry population to surrender to its control. In addition, in keeping with its very tight control on any foreign visitors to Timor-Leste, it had no interest in any foreigners observing its conduct of military operations in the territory.

233. Moreover, when it did change its policy on emergency relief, the Indonesian Government permitted only CRS and ICRC to work in Timor-Leste, and required both to adopt a low profile by, for example, not making public appeals for funds. It continued to refuse access by other aid organisations, including Oxfam and ACFOA.

**CRS survey and aid programme**

234. When CRS and the ICRC were finally permitted to conduct a survey of needs in Timor-Leste, they found a population shattered by famine and death.

235. In May 1979 CRS’s programme director for Indonesia, Frank Carlin, made an assessment of conditions in Timor-Leste. He visited 16 sites where East Timorese people lived under Indonesian control. CRS later described what he found in the following terms:

> The situation observed by Mr Carlin, a seasoned veteran of 14 years of relief work in Asia, was, in many locations, one of intense human suffering due to illness, hunger and starvation. Death rates were high. Those critically ill and dying were not limited to the very young and the very old - normally the first to succumb to sickness and starvation. Many persons in their prime years were dying. There were a large number of teenaged youths and young adults in a marasmatic state, a condition which had reduced them to little more than walking skeletons. Among the children, severe malnutrition was almost universal. Because of their bloated bellies and wasted limbs, children had to hold on to their tattered shorts with one hand to prevent them from sliding off; the few children less affected appeared normal by comparison.

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*Marasmus is the “dry” (thin, desiccated) form of malnourishment, which results from near starvation with deficiency of protein and nonprotein nutrients. The “wet” (edematous, swollen) form known as kwashiorkor occurs when protein deficiency is more marked than the calorie deficiency.*
At many of the sites visited, the people had only the most meagre of possessions: a pot, a sleeping mat and perhaps a little food from local officials. The clothing worn by the people were little better than rags. Sickness in the camps was rampant. Illnesses such as malaria and influenza, which would be serious even under normal conditions, took a deadly toll on the severely malnourished. Other health problems, such as scabies, conjunctivitis and tropical ulcers, were common. Great care had to be exercised in giving food to these people because they had been surviving on a diet devoid of protein. If given food too concentrated in protein, their systems could not absorb this. They would then go into protein shock and die. Cases of protein shock were witnessed by Mr Carlin. While it was observed that serious conditions did not exist everywhere in Timor-Leste, in those locations where large numbers of people had recently come down from the mountains conditions were as critical as anything Mr. Carlin had ever encountered.222

236. By September 1979, when it was able to begin its relief programme, CRS estimated that the number of people in a “serious or critically malnourished condition” was 300,000.223 As described previously, this number coincides with the number of people believed to be in Indonesian-controlled camps by the end of 1978. Given their known physical condition and lack of access to food, it seems that many identified by CRS as in distress were indeed camp internees. In any case, it means that about 55% of Timor-Leste’s surviving population (according to Indonesian Government figures) were thought to be in a serious or critical condition in September 1979.

237. The CRS programme was the larger of the two emergency aid programs. CRS and the ICRC agreed to divide their work so that the ICRC concentrated on the 60,000 people whose condition was most grave, while CRS focused on the remaining 240,000 people. The first CRS aid reached Dili in September 1979. It went out immediately to about 120,000 people and was later extended to some 240,000 people in about 120 settlements (see Table 6: Resettlement camps in late 1979, for settlement names).

**ICRC survey and aid programme**

238. In April 1979 ICRC delegates conducted a preliminary survey and found that “tens of thousands of people displaced by military operations and (were) facing starvation unless aid was brought to them rapidly, a situation aggravated by the absence of any medical service.”224 This was followed by a survey in late July 1979 of 13 villages or camps where conditions were known to be particularly bad. Of the 75,230 people in these places, ICRC delegates estimated that 60,000 were “in a state of alarming malnutrition” including “20,000 dying from hunger”.‡ Abandoning the usual low-key language of the ICRC, delegates publicly declared the situation

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1 The Indonesian Government estimated the population of East Timor in June 1979 at 533,176. A year later, a more exact estimate was 555,350 [Quoted in “East Timor: how many people have died?” pp. 22-24, ACFOA Development Dossier no.1, July 1980, 2d edn; Bappeda Tk. I, Timor Timur dalam angka: 1988, Dili: Kantor Statistik Propinsi Timor Timur, (Agency for Regional Development (Sub-District level), and The Statistics Bureau of East Timor East Timor in figures 1988 Dili.) 1989, p. 27].

was “as bad as Biafra and potentially as serious as Kampuchea”. The ICRC medical coordinator for the aid programme said “he had rarely been so distressed by what he had seen.”

239. As shown above (see Table 6), CRS figures showed high death rates in Luro (479 per month) and Iliomar, both in Lautém, (305 per month)—both places on the ICRC’s list. The Commission has also received evidence of very bad conditions in Laclubar (Manatuto), Uatu-Lari (Viqueque), Naltarora (Manatuto), and Loloteo (Bobonaro). All were strategic locations, mostly in the mountains. The Indonesian military prevented people from leaving the towns, each of which held only a few thousand people. The traumatic impact of such massive numbers of deaths on these small communities is now difficult to imagine and continues in its long lasting impact on the social, cultural and economic fabric of these communities.

240. ICRC aid began to arrive in Dili in October 1979. It was administered jointly with the Indonesian Red Cross. The first assistance went immediately to Hatulia (Ermera) and Laclubar (Manatuto). The initial six-month relief operation was expected to distribute 1,800 tons of corn, 360 tons of rice, 1,080 tons of beans, 216 tons of vegetable oil, 270 tons of milk powder, and 180 tons of protein biscuits to 60,000 people. By 1981 the ICRC’s food aid programme was reaching 80,000 people in 15 settlements. It budgeted A$7 million (US$ 6.26 million) for the first stage of the operation, almost half of which was earmarked for the transportation of the aid by helicopter.

Controls and limitations

241. Both the CRS and the ICRC aid programmes were subject to stringent Indonesian military control. Military intervention often served to restrict the relief programme rather than to facilitate it. The CRS submission to the Commission shows that all government decisions in Timor-Leste, including on matters relating to CRS operations, were controlled by Lieutenant General L B (Benny) Moerdani, who in 1979-80 was Assistant to the Minister of Defence and Security for Intelligence (Asintel Hankam) and Deputy Chief of the State Intelligence Coordinating Agency (Badan Koordinasi Intelijen Negara, Bakin). General Moerdani had been closely involved in planning the invasion of Timor-Leste in 1975 and it remained his area of competence.

242. Security was so tight that CRS Jakarta was not permitted to telephone its office in Dili, leading CRS to directly ask General Moerdani to authorise a phone line. CRS also asked him to intervene when a helicopter was withdrawn for use by the oil industry. General Moerdani vetoed a proposed school-feeding programme and blocked the appointment of Father Locatelli as project manager for a proposed development programme in 1981. A proposal to recruit Indonesian doctors for CRS was also blocked.

243. On the ground, a severe shortage of trucks could have been relieved by a military organisation maintaining tens of thousands of troops in the field. As it was, CRS had to build its truck fleet by chartering private trucks, and repairing and then renting the civil administration’s broken-down trucks. Even these trucks were sometimes taken back for use by their owners.

244. The actual ICRC presence in Timor-Leste during the emergency aid programme was minimal. The distribution was actually conducted by Indonesian Red Cross personnel. This compares unfavourably with the level of ICRC presence in Timor-Leste before the December 1975 invasion when no famine conditions existed in the territory.
Gilman dos Santos, who worked for CRS in 1979, gave valuable testimony on the scale and nature of the humanitarian crisis at this time and of the limited ability of agencies to address it. During his work with CRS, Gilman dos Santos traveled to all districts across Timor-Leste and observed for himself the condition of communities and the role of the Indonesian military:

In 1979 CRS arrived. The presence of international organisations in 1979 was due to the terrible situation of famine across all of Timor-Leste. This assistance came one year after the reports from the ambassadors’ visit. Imagine, one year later! But still it helped. At that time we never heard of anyone visiting from the United Nations, even though we were engaged in a colossal conflict. I want to say that the humanitarian assistance that came was late, but it also saved many people. It was too late because Timor was closed off. Not even Indonesian civilians knew what was happening here. Journalists, whether they were Indonesians or foreigners, could not report on what was going on here. We couldn’t even telephone other parts of Indonesia: It was very closed off: Very closed and tightly watched by the Indonesian military. Because of these tight controls, CRS left Timor-Leste after five years of its humanitarian mission.

Just travelling between Dili and Baucau we had to stop 13 times, at every district and sub-district command, to have our papers checked. We already had 26 signatures but they would require more…There were some military people who were helpful, in Vemasse for example, and in Turiscal and Alas…To overcome problems with the military we told them the food came from America. We showed them the US flag on the packages, and the Indonesian soldiers were very afraid of the Americans.231

The Commission notes that aid was not distributed in a non-discriminatory manner to those in need. According to Gilman dos Santos, CRS was not able to distribute humanitarian relief in a politically neutral way:

CRS was allowed to distribute food only to people in ABRI-controlled areas. We could not distribute to people in the mountains. ABRI did not want food distributed to people in the mountains, because they thought that way they could force them down to surrender.232

The Commission also heard testimony alleging that the Indonesian military misappropriated aid. According to Gilman dos Santos, aid goods often surfaced in the local market or were withheld for personal use:
Our job was to go to the district or sub-district and count the number of families. Then we would report back and be given 10kg of food for each person, plus medical supplies. We were supposed to distribute the food [directly] but were forced to surrender it to the Koramil district military post. They would not permit us to give out so much food at once because they said it would be given to Fretilin. They would only give out 5kg. They were supposed to give out the other 5kg when new supplies were sent by CRS. The rest, we were told, they used themselves or sold or used as wages for building programmes, although the government had already made funds available. Or they exchanged it for eggs, chickens and so on...We know food was sold by ABRI in the following places and we reported this to the CRS head office in Dili: Maubisse, Ermera, Hatu Bulico, Liquiça, Manatuto, Baucau, Lospalos, Laga and Suai. Clothing aid was sorted and the good clothes were kept by the military. If a CRS worker protested they would be hit and threatened with a pistol: “You must be one of the Fretilin—I will kill you.”

We were told by people, and sometimes we would see this ourselves, that aid was being sold by soldiers from the Kodim or Koramil to local stores or to wealthy civilians. Often it was just given to members of their family.\textsuperscript{233}

248. In a separate interview with the Commission, Father Eligio Locatelli of Fatumaca (Baucau) confirmed these allegations:

> Several Chinese shopkeepers were forced to buy some of the aid rice from soldiers and resell it in their shops. One Chinese man came to the priests worried about what he was being forced to do.\textsuperscript{234}

**Impact of aid on the population**

249. During its emergency programme (5 September 1979 to December 1980), CRS delivered 17,000 tons of food, 430 water buffaloes, 195 tons of rice seed and 326 tons of corn seed. It claimed to have reached 240,000 people. In its Final Report of 18 March 1981, CRS noted that based on data collected in ten of the locations where it had been working, its programme had had the effect of sharply reducing mortality rates:

> In the period of January 1979 through July 1979, the average number of deaths per month was 1,296; in the period September 1979 through January 1980, the rate had dropped to 70, clearly illustrating the positive impact of the emergency feeding programme.\textsuperscript{235}

**Concluding comment**

250. From evidence it has gathered, the Commission acknowledges the already desperate condition of the people when they surrendered to Indonesian forces. However it believes that the famine took place because the Indonesian military was negligent by not ensuring basic needs were met after people entered camps under its control. From the evidence it has gathered, the Commission believes that, for the many who surrendered, famine began some time in 1978 and continued for at least a year, up until September 1979.
251. The famine was not caused by unusual seasonal conditions (see Box: El Niño was not the cause of the famine, below). The Commission believes that the military had arranged or permitted the delivery of emergency food aid, or allowed the population to return to their home villages and work their gardens, there would have been no famine in Timor-Leste. But the military did not permit them to do so because its overriding objective was the military defeat of Fretilin/Falintil. This same objective meant the military continued to prevent aid distribution in areas outside its control, even after admitting international aid agencies into Timor Leste.

252. In short the Commission believes Indonesian military policies and practice were directly responsible for the disastrous 1978-1979 famine in Timor-Leste.

**El Niño was not the cause of the famine**

Several people have suggested that famine in Timor-Leste in the years 1978-79 was caused by drought rather than the actions of the Indonesian military. For example, the US ambassador to Indonesia at the time, Edward Masters, told the US Congress after a visit to Timor-Leste in September 1979 that the rain that year had been only 25% of that during the previous season. Although he said the famine was due to war and environmental factors, he testified at length about the drought and local agricultural practices, ignoring the effects of the war and the use of internment camps.

Periodic extended drought caused by El Niño weather patterns often affects Timor-Leste’s agricultural production. In Timor-Leste, if the El Niño event begins between February and April, it can cause drought or late rains. During the period of the conflict in Timor Leste, significant El Niño events occurred five times, as shown in the table below. At other times the rainfall was normal.

An El Niño event can change the weather in two ways. It can delay the start of the wet season, and it can reduce the rainfall during the wet season. If the wet season starts late, the harvest is also late and food stored during the dry season can run out while people wait for the rains to come. However, East Timorese farmers normally turn to other food sources at such a time, for example wild foods. So a late wet season is not a major cause of hunger. If less rain falls in the wet season, the result is much worse because the harvest will be small or it might fail completely. This can cause food shortages until the following harvest.

The Commission found that little rainfall data was freely available for this historical period in Timor-Leste. However, Dr John McBride of the Australian Bureau of Meteorology prepared an analysis of the potential impact of El Niño on Timor-Leste from sets of historical rainfall data for Dili as well as a number of towns around the eastern Indonesian archipelago, which appear on a publicly accessible website. These data show that the El Niño event of February 1977 to April 1978 occurred roughly at the time when famine was serious in Timor-Leste. However, this particular El Niño event was one of the mildest to occur in Timor-Leste. Rainfall during the wet season was only 7% less than normal. The wet season did start late, but this, as explained, is not in itself a major problem. Moreover, there was no El Niño event in 1979.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>El Niño event</th>
<th>Wet Season Start</th>
<th>Wet Season Rainfall Decrease</th>
<th>Potential Food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortage Months</td>
<td>70 days late</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>Apr 1978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Rainfall Deviation</th>
<th>Rainfall Deviation</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Rainfall Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr 1982-Jul 1983</td>
<td>40 days late</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>Apr 1983-Apr 1984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 1997-Apr 1998</td>
<td>on time</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The rainfall data for the eastern end of the Indonesian archipelago are not conclusive. The average for the whole north coast of Timor-Leste (known as DMP91) does not show lower than normal rainfall in 1979.

This was based on three or four stations. But Dili was very dry between January and April 1979. It experienced a meteorological drought in those months. For the whole year of 1979, rainfall in Dili was 31% below normal (not 75% below normal as alleged). However, Dili is much drier than other parts of Timor-Leste. It lies on the north coast, which receives much less rainfall than the mountainous interior and the south coast. Low Dili rainfall is not a good indicator of drought in Timor-Leste's agricultural regions. We have no data for those regions. Other towns in the eastern archipelago also experienced low rainfall at this time, namely Kendari (South-east Sulawesi), and Waingapu (Sumba). Some had normal rains, namely Kupang (West Timor) and Saumlaki (South-east Maluku). Ujung Pandang (South Sulawesi) had above average rainfall in the first months of 1979.

Thus the data are insufficient to be completely sure that there was no drought in 1979. However, several reasons suggest that 1979 was not a drought year for all of Timor-Leste. They are: absence of an El Niño event; normal average rainfall along the north coast (DMP91); and the absence of consistent drought in towns around the region. Therefore the Commission does not believe that rainfall (whether late or absent) was a significant enough factor to have caused the famine of the years 1978-79. Only the actions of the Indonesian armed forces, described in this chapter, can explain the famine.

More serious El Niño events occurred at other times during the period 1974-99. Some of these did cause food shortages. The years 1983, 1995 and 1998 were years of fairly severe drought. The hunger that occurred in parts of Timor-Leste in 1983-84 may have been partly caused by drought. However, none of these hunger years were as bad as 1978-79. The people of Timor-Leste can generally cope with drought. The real problem was war and the actions of the Indonesian military.

### 7.3.5 Forced displacement and localised famine in the 1980s

253. Forced displacement, causing localised food shortages and sometimes resulting in deaths, continued to take place in the 1980s. From evidence that it has gathered, the Commission has found that there was an Indonesian policy with two main patterns of forced displacement in this period:

- relocation to new resettlement areas in order to achieve better military control of the population
- relocation and concentration in a defined area under restriction, in retaliation for or as collective punishment for an attack on Indonesian military targets.

254. During the early 1980s Resistance forces regrouped and reorganised, and staged a number of localised attacks on ABRI units, such as the Marabia (Dili) attack of 10 June 1980, the Kablaki (Ainaro and Manufahi) uprising of 20 August 1982, the Kkaras (Viqueque) and Lautêm uprising of 8 August 1983. These attacks were followed by retaliatory operations by the
Indonesian military, one consequence of which was the displacement of thousands of civilians in the surrounding areas, with severe humanitarian impact.

255. In the early 1980s thousands of young men were forcibly recruited to join military operations to search for Falintil. This mass forced recruitment affected agricultural activities, and thus food security. Forced recruitment of the civilian population is not discussed at length in this chapter, but in Chapter 7.7: Violation of Laws of War.

**Dismantling the resettlement camps: strategic relocation**

256. By the 1980s the Indonesian military had control over much of the territory. Many of the resettlement camps were closed. Some of their inhabitants moved back to their own villages. Some remained confined in places where they had been resettled after surrender, subject to the same restrictive regime of control. Others spent several years being moved from village to village before finally being allowed to return to their home villages. Yet others were moved to strategic relocation villages, sometimes called “new settlements” (pemukiman baru), usually located near major roads. The decision seems to have been based on a variety of security considerations, including the accessibility of the villages from which camp inhabitants had originated.

257. The Indonesian Government claimed that the resettlement policy was designed to help people. In various parts of Indonesia such as Kalimantan and Sulawesi, the government also moved people out of remote areas to live in towns or near roads with better access to schools, clinics and markets. The policy was a part of the government's rural development programme. In Timor-Leste the authorities often said that their reason for establishing these new villages was to ease delivery of services to otherwise remote populations, or because “slash-and-burn” farming practices had destroyed the soil in areas where the people transferred to the new villages had previously lived, rendering agricultural production impossible.

258. The Commission notes that there were positive aspects in the resettlement policy. Even after independence, many East Timorese people chose to stay in the towns and villages where they had been resettled. However, the evidence in this chapter shows that to portray these forced relocations as part of a rural development programme is misleading. It overlooks the fact that in Timor-Leste the transfers were organised by the military with military objectives in mind. Military documents make plain that the overriding reason for the creation of the new villages was to remove people from areas where the Resistance was active. Especially in its early years, the programme did not improve people’s welfare but had the opposite effect, starvation. Consequently many people moved away from these relocation villages as soon as they could.

259. The creation of relocation villages occurred in different ways. They were often built from forced unpaid labour. Some were already existing villages, which grew much larger as the military forced people from the countryside around them into these places. In some cases entire communities were relocated into existing villages along major roads, often causing land and resource disputes (see Chapter 7.9: Violations of Economic and Social Rights). Some existing camps became strategic villages as people continued to be held there.

**Relocation in the 1980s: the options**

*Return to the home village*

260. A series of military manuals were written in 1982. They contain detailed information about the Indonesian army’s strategy for establishing security in areas of the district of Baucau that were still considered “sensitive”, and provide some insight into military thinking about resettlement at this time. One of the manuals makes it clear that the military thought that returning people to their home villages could have security benefits:
The Sub-district of Laga has proposed the relocation of the Soba village to [Boleha], and of the [Tekinomata] village to Sama Guia. If settlements are established in these two places, it will be possible to gain control of the north side of Mount Matebian and the region of Susugua. Meanwhile, the administration of the Sub-district of Baguia has proposed that the village of [illegible] should be returned to its original site in the region of Bahatata while the village of Lari Sula should for the time being be resettled in the region of Caidawa...The opening up of these new resettlement areas will open up the way to [Uatu-Carbau].

261. Another manual contains an analysis of one village, Bualale, on the slopes of Mount Matebian, whose population had been allowed to return home from the town of Quelicai in 1982 in the general context of its "comprehensive development". It is acknowledged that in the town of Quelicai the villagers were unable to cultivate their own gardens, and therefore they did not have enough food. This was given as one reason for returning them to Bualale. But there was another reason, based on security considerations. It was noted that Bualale was the home village of David Alex, the commander of the 2nd Company of the Red Brigade of Falintil, and therefore a potential breeding ground of support for the Resistance. The manual makes it clear that the Indonesian military believed that the return of the population could actually bolster security in the area. Several measures had been taken that, it was hoped, would produce this outcome. Most of the families with relatives still in the forest had already been sent to the island of Ataúro. A new village head had been appointed, who was regarded as supportive of Indonesian aims. The people were described as "participating well in security and development", although it was admitted that because of intimidation by Fretilin and "for other reasons" a resistance network was still thought to be operating in the village. There were ten Hansip and one platoon of Ratih, and another 50 people who could be mobilised on an occasional basis.

262. Another of the military manuals gives an indication of the real impact of the military’s security priorities on village populations. In a section on "Intensified Control of the Population" it prescribes heavy surveillance and restrictions on movement. The manual instructs units operating in villages that "every single activity of the population should be known precisely". It advises establishing networks of informers, requiring travel permits for journeys out of the village, setting up checkpoints around the village, holding unscheduled roll calls or inspections and house-to-house patrols.

263. The Commission’s discussion with the people of the village of Bualale about their lives during the Indonesian occupation reveals how the village viewed the regime imposed on them by the military after they returned to their homes:
1981: About 20 inhabitants of Bualale were suspected of being “GPK” [Gerombolan Pengacau Keamanan, members of the “band of security disruptors”, that is, the Resistance] and were arrested by Battalion 521 and brought to Quelicai. They were detained for one year. While in detention, their activities included the following: constructing the meeting hall in Quelicai, building the health clinic and forced labour repairing the roads around the town of Quelicai…That year [1981] about five families suspected [by ABRI] of being in contact with Falintil were forcibly moved to Ataúro. At that time the people became more afraid and traumatised because they were always under suspicion of being in contact with the people in the forest (Falintil). One woman, Eugenia, from the aldeia of Lialura, died of hunger on Ataúro…Three families, who were due to depart for Ataúro, ended up staying in Bualale, because there was no ship to take them. So they remained in Bualale, but lived under constant threat [from ABRI] who were always accusing them of being “GPK” or “Fretilin”.

1982-83: It was only [in 1982] that the people of the village of Bualale who had been living in the Quelicai camp were sent home to the village of Bualale.

At this time the inhabitants of Bualale were always under suspicion because there was still a group from the village who were still in the forest, and [ABRI] were always doing things such as:

Ordering the women to prepare food for the Hansip who were assigned to Bualale

Holding entertainments (dances) with the women every night

Forcing women whose children were still small to participate in these events

Forcing women to perform the night watch

At that time Battalion Zipur 9 (109) and Team Saka (Railakan) led by F57 tortured the inhabitants and there was one person, Mateus from the aldeia of Lialura, who was tortured to death…

1984-86: In these years the situation continued as before.241

New villages

264. Villagers were often moved from resettlement camps to entirely new villages located in places that were deemed by the military to be more secure than their home villages.

265. Between 1979 and 1981 people from six villages in the sub-district of Quelicai (Baucau)—Quelicai, Gurusa, Afaça, Abafala, Uaitame and Bualale—were forcibly moved from the camp in town of Quelicai to a new settlement on the coast called Kampung Mulia, sited between the villages of Tequinaumata and Seiçal (Laga, Baucau). Approximately 205 families were made to move to Mulia because their own villages were close to the forest and it was thought that they might give support to Falintil. When it was the turn of the people of Gurusa and Afaça to move, they refused to leave their villages. All their belongings were then taken out of
their houses. The houses were then burned, their crops and livestock were destroyed, and several of the inhabitants were beaten and stabbed. They were then put in army trucks and taken to Mulia under heavy guard.\textsuperscript{242} The community of Uaitame recalled that on 8 January 1979 Indonesian troops under the command of a Special Forces (Kopassandha) officer came from Laga to move all 600 inhabitants of Uaitame from the town of Quelicai to Mulia. The people refused to go at first but the next day the Kopassandha commander and his men returned and forced them to board the 13 trucks they had brought with them while shooting wildly into the air.

266. The first few months in their new location were the most difficult. The people of Uaitame described to the Commission the conditions they lived in when they arrived in Mulia:

\begin{quote}
The people living in Mulia did not have houses, beds, cooking equipment, food or clothes. As a consequence about 250 people died of hunger and disease. At that time those who died were buried naked and without coffins. Between 8 and ten people were dying every day.\textsuperscript{243}
\end{quote}

267. After three or four months the people started receiving food through the Catholic Church. Two months later the local government provided them with zinc sheets for roofing so that they could build houses.\textsuperscript{244}

268. The situation improved slowly. Restrictions on movement caused the inhabitants of Mulia to face continued food shortages, as they were unable to farm away from their immediate surroundings. Their living conditions were still very basic and there was no access to medical care. As a result, according to a source who did not wish to be identified, people continued to die during this period. In 1980, CRS and the ICRC began distributing aid in Kampung Mulia. The Indonesian military began to ease the restrictions on movement, allowing people to find suitable agricultural plots away from their homes, though they were still required to carry travel passes (\textit{surat jalan}).\textsuperscript{245}

\textit{Repeated resettlement}

269. The people of some villages were not allowed to return to their homes for many years. In such cases, after the dismantlement of the resettlement camps the population was often moved several times before being allowed to settle again in their home village.

270. The people of Lelalai (Quelicai, Baucau) experienced this. They told the Commission of years of forced displacement and control at the hands of the Indonesian military-supported militia, Team Saka, before they were allowed to return to their home village in 1988:

\begin{quote}
1982: The population was moved to an area near the village of Aba. There they were ordered to build an emergency school, but the children could not go to the school because they did not have clothes to wear.

1984-86: The population was moved again, to the village of Laisorulai, where they were kept under close surveillance by the Team Saka militia [Railakan] led by Julião Fraga and others. At that time the people were allowed to go looking for food, though at night they had to return to the “concentration camp”. [When they went out to look for food] they were told to collect candlenut and copra to give to them [the militia]. If they failed to bring back [candlenut and copra], whether they were men or women, they would be tortured, beaten and put in a drum filled with water.
\end{quote}
1987 The commander of Team Saka told the people of Lelalai that they could go back to their aldeia, but first they had to make gardens and plant candle nut, copra and teak in them. At that time the local government paid no attention to the needs of the people of Lelalai, whose life and death was in the hands of Team Saka.

1988 After the villagers had done what they had been told to do by the commander of Team Saka...they were told to go to their former homes. But still their everyday lives were not free or normal. All their activities were subject to exactly the same restrictions as before.246

Continued restriction in resettlement areas

271. As noted previously in this chapter, when people returned to their home sub-district of Lliomar (Lautém) in late 1978, they were not allowed to return to their own villages, but rather were resettled into strategic settlement areas ("daerah pemukiman"). The villagers of Lliomar II, who had previously lived in the area of Kampung Lama about three kilometres south of the town of Lliomar, were relocated in an area north of Ailebebe Village and south of Lliomar I. The people of the village of Fuat, who had previously lived in the Bubutau area north of Maluhira, were concentrated adjacent to the northern edge of Lliomar I. Villagers from Cainliu, including those from the distant aldeia of Larimi, were forced to settle in the area of the present day junior high school and church, with the villagers from the aldeia of Caidabu resettled nearby. Tirilolo villagers were also resettled near the church.

272. In the resettlement area of the town of Lliomar, the villagers were only permitted to farm within 500 metres of their new homes, with any further movement requiring approval and the issue of a travel permit. These restrictive measures were intended to cut supplies to the Resistance by isolating the civilian population from Falintil who remained in the forest. Unable to gain access to their traditional gardens and fields, the villagers suffered considerable hunger and hardship.247

273. In 1982 the people of four of the villages of Lliomar Sub-district were allowed to return to their villages. However, for the villagers of Lliomar I and Lliomar II, the situation did not change. They were forced to remain in their resettlement area until 1988.

274. The people of Lliomar suffered considerable hardship and hunger in the years 1984-85. The villagers of Tirilolo and Cainliu had been allowed to return from the town at the Lliomar resettlement area to their original village locations in 1981. The people of the aldeia of Larimi had been moved to an area adjacent to the aldeia of Liufalun, Cainliu in 1982. Even so, access to many of their traditional fields remained restricted by the Indonesian security forces. Conditions were particularly difficult for the villagers of Lliomar I and Lliomar II, who had not been allowed to return to their homes.248 The ICRC conducted an emergency feeding programme in Lliomar from 1979 to 1981. This was continued by UNICEF from mid-1982, but suspended in 1983 when there was an escalation of Indonesian military activities in the area. Mário Viegas Carrascalão, who was the Governor of East Timor at the time, recalled that his “bitterest memory was when famine hit the district of Lliomar in 1985”.249

275. In 1988 the Indonesian military adopted a new strategy for the people of Lliomar II by moving them from the sub-district centre of Lliomar to the area of Iradaruta, on the northeastern fringe of their original village. This amounted to the creation of a strategic relocation village: the aim, the community of Lliomar II told the Commission, was to “cut Falintil routes and support the

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1 Ramos-Horta, 1987: p. 196. Budiardjo, 1984: p. 94 quotes a comprehensive Fretilin report on conditions: “in Luro...starvation is the constant companion of people here who have no staple food at all...All that can be said of conditions in the lliomar camp is that they are just as bad as in Luro”.

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military’s operations in the area”. The community also told the Commission that the military did not achieve their objectives because the population did not give them information.\(^{250}\)

**Population redistribution**

276. The forced relocation of people, first during the surrenders and captures between 1977 and 1979 and then later when further forced transfers took place, caused a radical change in the settlement pattern in Timor-Leste. Entire areas were emptied of people, who were moved to new places, some previously uninhabited.

277. The table below shows the change in population in different sub-districts between 1970 and 1980. While the two sets of figures should be compared with a great deal of caution,\(^1\) they certainly indicate major changes in population distribution. Most of these changes were the direct result of the Indonesian military operations between 1977 and 1978 and the forced resettlement which followed.

278. On the whole the areas where population declined were in remote forest or mountain areas, such as Barique/Natarbora (Manatuto), Fatuberliu (Manufahi), Lolotoe (Bobonaro), Lacluta (Viqueque), Turiscai (Manufahi), Maubisse (Ainaro), Mape/Zumalai (Covalima), Laclo (Manatuto), Quelicai (Baucau), Luro (Lautém), Fatululik (Covalima), Bagua (Baucau) and Laclubar (Manatuto). Many of these areas had been Resistance strongholds in the late 1970s, and certainly suffered many fatalities. After the destruction of the Resistance bases between 1977 and 1978 the Indonesian military moved many survivors out of these areas in the hope that the remnants of the Resistance would be starved of support.

279. By contrast other sub-districts contained a larger population in 1980 than in 1970, far more than could be caused by births alone. This happened because survivors of the war moved to these places. Many of the places were district capitals, situated along main roads and in the lowlands. The towns of Dili, Manatuto, Viqueque, Baucau, Atabae (Bobonaro), Lautém/Moro, Lospalos, Maliana (Bobonaro), Hatu Udo (then in Manufahi, now in Ainaro) and Bobonaro are examples. Sub-districts in Oecusse grew for a different reason. In Oecusse there was no war, and no displacement. In the late 1970s Indonesian civilians began to settle in Oecusse. Growth in Dili was also partly due to Indonesian immigration.

**Table 10 - Sub-district population change 1970-1980**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Sub-district</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ainaro</td>
<td>Maubisse</td>
<td>20,119</td>
<td>10,409</td>
<td>-48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turiscai</td>
<td>5,981</td>
<td>2,890</td>
<td>-51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baucau</td>
<td>Bagua</td>
<td>12,239</td>
<td>8,138</td>
<td>-33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laga</td>
<td>14,914</td>
<td>13,989</td>
<td>-6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quelicai</td>
<td>18,780</td>
<td>11,258</td>
<td>-40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vemasse</td>
<td>5,727</td>
<td>4,977</td>
<td>-13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venilale</td>
<td>11,736</td>
<td>11,148</td>
<td>-5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobonaro</td>
<td>Balibo</td>
<td>30,743</td>
<td>13,179</td>
<td>-57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cailaco</td>
<td>6,753</td>
<td>5,240</td>
<td>-22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lolotoe</td>
<td>11,689</td>
<td>4,502</td>
<td>-61.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) On the shortcomings of data derived from both the 1970 and 1980 censuses, see Chapter 7.6: Profile of Human Rights Violations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Population Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covalima</td>
<td>Fatululik</td>
<td>1,899 to 1,215, -36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fatumean</td>
<td>2,379 to 2,164, -9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fohorem</td>
<td>4,677 to 3,515, -24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mape/Zumalai</td>
<td>13,494 to 7,043, -47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>Aileu</td>
<td>26,217 to 9,241, -64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remexio</td>
<td>7,851 to 4,880, -37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>Atsabe</td>
<td>15,325 to 10,668, -30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hatulia</td>
<td>20,743 to 15,096, -27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lautém</td>
<td>Luro</td>
<td>8,212 to 5,205, -36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquiça</td>
<td>Bazartete</td>
<td>16,610 to 8,997, -45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liquiça</td>
<td>16,416 to 8,895, -45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maubara</td>
<td>14,610 to 11,450, -21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manatuto</td>
<td>Barique/ Natarbora</td>
<td>5,744 to 1,683, -70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laco</td>
<td>6,512 to 3,578, -45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laclubar</td>
<td>15,316 to 10,611, -30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laleia</td>
<td>3,169 to 1,695, -46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufahi</td>
<td>Alas</td>
<td>5,034 to 3,574, -29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fatuberliu</td>
<td>8,942 to 3,074, -65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>18,438 to 17,250, -6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viqueque</td>
<td>Lacluta</td>
<td>9,965 to 4,132, -58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ossu</td>
<td>16,655 to 12,022, -27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uatu-Carbau</td>
<td>6,071 to 5,802, -4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ainano</td>
<td>Ainaro</td>
<td>8,985 to 10,428, 16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hatu Builico</td>
<td>6,829 to 8,459, 23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baucau</td>
<td>Baucau</td>
<td>20,398 to 25,317, 24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobonaro</td>
<td>Atabae</td>
<td>5,013 to 6,346, 26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bobonaro</td>
<td>11,085 to 20,480, 84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maliana</td>
<td>7,508 to 12,233, 62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covalima</td>
<td>Suai</td>
<td>13,484 to 15,250, 13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tilomar</td>
<td>3,272 to 3,501, 7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>Ataúro</td>
<td>3,133 to 5,206, 66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>28,516 to 62,874, 120.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>18,506 to 18,816, 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letefoho</td>
<td>11,410 to 11,501, 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lautém</td>
<td>Iliomar</td>
<td>4,136 to 5,435, 31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lautém/ Moro</td>
<td>7,088 to 9,143, 29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lospalos</td>
<td>10,992 to 15,693, 42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutuala</td>
<td>2,200 to 2,623, 19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manatuto</td>
<td>Manatuto</td>
<td>5,703 to 6,875, 20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufahi</td>
<td>Hatu Udo</td>
<td>4,724 to 7,871, 66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oecusse</td>
<td>Nitibe</td>
<td>4,753 to 7,058, 48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oesilo</td>
<td>5,922 to 7,296, 23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pante Makassar</td>
<td>10,698 to 17,034, 59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passabe</td>
<td>4,379 to 5,722, 30.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relocation after resettlement: some examples

280. To better understand the nature and impact of forced population movements in the 1980s, the Commission conducted research to document people’s experience of relocation and its consequences. The Commission believes these relocations were not organised in a way which guaranteed the protection of life. The basic needs of the affected people were not met, particularly during the transition period before the relocated population could support itself.

**Natar Ulun (Vemasse, Baucau)**

281. In 1979 or 1980 the people of Caicua and other aldeias in the hills behind the town of Vemasse were forced to move to Natar Ulun, three kilometres outside Vemasse. Because of Caicua’s isolation (there was no road connecting Caicua and Vemasse), Indonesian patrols had difficulty in gaining access to the area. Manuel Alves Moreira told the Commission that the Indonesian military believed that the people of Caicua were supporting Fretilin/Falintil and that some had fled to the forest to join the Resistance.

282. Sixty-nine families were forced to move. They were made to dismantle their houses and pack all their possessions. Their agricultural plots were razed to ensure that Falintil forces did not take their crops. With their meagre possessions on their backs, the families were forced by the soldiers to walk through mountainous country to their new location, Natar Ulun. The move took three days.\(^{251}\)

283. On arrival their movements were limited to the immediate area. They experienced hunger and sickness due to this restriction. Manuel Alves Moreira recalls that during the first year between 2 and 5 people died every day of hunger, malaria, cholera and tuberculosis. In 1980 CRS and the ICRC began to provide relief aid. At the same time the Indonesian military began to allow the community more freedom to go beyond the new village to farm. However, their movements were still under strict control. They were required to obtain special permits (surat jalan) if they wished to move outside the village, and to report in on their return (wajib lapor). The situation improved with the opening of access to agricultural land, but the strict permit controls continued until 1988.\(^{252}\)

**Laclo (Laclo, Manatuto)**

284. After fleeing to the mountains of Hatu Konan during the invasion, the people of Laclo were driven out of the mountains by repeated bombing and surrendered in Ilimano (Uma Kaduak, Laclo) in July 1978. They were brought to the camp in Metinaro (Dili) where 40,000 people who had surrendered were being held. Manuel Carceres da Costa told the Commission that he was eventually allowed to move back to the town of Laclo in August 1979. The move back was not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viqueque</th>
<th>Viqueque</th>
<th>14,665</th>
<th>17,986</th>
<th>22.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jatu-Lari</td>
<td></td>
<td>13,911</td>
<td>14,683</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>610,270</td>
<td>555,350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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easy. First only the men could go, and only as far as the bridge near Manatuto where they stayed for a month. Then the soldiers took the men to Laclo where they built barracks to live in. The women followed in October. Soldiers from Battalion 405 guarded the community for three months. The ground in the town is stony and hard, but the soldiers would not allow the people to go to their old gardens outside town. During this time the people went hungry and many died due to hunger and illness. Manuel Carceres told the Commission that there were deaths every day during this period, and that only in early 1980 did the soldiers give people freedom to go out to make gardens:

During the three months we were held in a “concentration camp”, around 300 residents of Hatu Konan perished. Only after many people had died did the Indonesian military began telling people to go home. By then there were only 400 of us left.  

Lacluta (Viqueque)

285. José Andrade dos Santos gave evidence to the Commission about the forced displacement of the people of the village of Ahic (Lacluta, Viqueque) at the foot of Mount Laline in 1980. As already noted, people from Viqueque, Manatuto, Manufahi, Baucau, Ainaro and Dili had been concentrated in the town of Lacluta after surrender. Under instructions from the Sub-district administrator (Camat) of Lacluta and soldiers from Battalion 745, the population of Ahic and and other villages in the sub-district were moved to Rade Uma (Dilor, Viqueque).

286. In their testimony to the Commission the community of Ahic described their treatment after the move as much the same as it had been when they were still in the town of Lacluta. Women continued to be subject to rape and “forced marriages” by members of the Indonesian military. People who had held positions in Fretilin and former Falintil soldiers continued to be subjected to regular interrogation and ill-treatment. All males over the age of 15 were forced to perform nightly patrols, and if they failed to do so were subjected to such punishments as having to walk on hot ashes and lie in dirty water for several hours. At least one person, Carlos from the aldeia of Halimean, was killed by ABRI. Another, Mrío Lopes, also from Halimean, was taken to Baucau and disappeared. The men also had to do forced labour. They built six public buildings without pay, including a clinic and houses for the Sub-district military command (Koramil) and government officials. They were made to work on the water system for one month. The distribution of food, blankets and medicine by the ICRC in 1980 helped improve living conditions, but restrictions on movement one kilometre beyond the village continued, making it difficult to carry out routine tasks essential to making a livelihood, such as cultivating gardens, cutting sago palm and tending buffaloes.

287. In 1982 the people of Uma Tolu, another village in sub-district of Lacluta, who had also been resettled in Dilor, were forced to move to Uma Lor in the village of Luca (Viqueque, Viqueque). The reason given for the move was to “facilitate ABRI control of the area.” The operation was led by the head of military, the head of police, and other officials of the sub-district of Lacluta.

WEBEREK, WETO (ALAS, MANUFahi)

288. The people from the villages of Fahinehan, Bubususu and Caicasa (Fatuberliu, Manufahi) were forced to move in 1981 to a new location called Weberek, in the aldeia of Oeto (Dotik, Alas, Manufahi), because they were suspected of providing food and support to Falintil. They were made to leave their agricultural plots, which were burned and destroyed by Indonesian soldiers to prevent Falintil from harvesting the abandoned food sources. As mountain people who had originally lived in a fertile area, the villagers found it difficult to adjust to living in the hot swampy
lowlands. Sebastião Magalhães told the Commission: “During these moves many people died because they could not cope with the heat and the hunger.”

289. The Indonesian military provided only tarpaulins for shelter and insufficient rations of poor quality corn and rice for emergency consumption. During the first year and a half the people living in Weberek suffered from malnutrition, malaria, cholera and tuberculosis. It was only after the arrival of the ICRC in the middle of 1982 that the situation improved. The Indonesian military began to allow villagers to return to their fertile agricultural plots to plant food during the rainy season, but in 1983 they were moved back to Weto and their agricultural plots were destroyed for the second time. This situation continued until the 1990s when some people returned to their original homes. Others moved to sites established by the Indonesian government under its “local transmigration” programme in the newly-established sub-district of Weilaluhu.

Gleno (Ermera, Ermera)

290. Gleno was a new township, created to replace Ermera Town as the district capital. It was built on the riverflats several kilometres north of Ermera Town. Gabriel Ximenes told the Commission that he had been moved to a resettlement camp in Ermera Town with his family after surrendering in Fatubesi in February 1979. Shortly after the family had been allowed to return to their home in Ermera, Indonesian soldiers took him and about a hundred other men from Ermera Town and the nearby village of Ponilala. Their families stayed behind in Ermera Town. The military forced them to start clearing the uninhabited area that later became Gleno Town. Every day they were ordered to clear vegetation from a fixed area. If they failed to meet their daily quota they were punished by being tortured. Gabriel Ximenes said that the soldiers killed three men who were too ill to work. They worked on the construction of the new town for four years. They had no time to make gardens, and ate their meals at the ABRI posts. In 1983, once the work was finished, ABRI no longer fed the men. Nor did they permit them to return to Ermera Town. Instead, their families came down to Gleno. The men still had not been able to make gardens and with the arrival of the families, there was starvation and some people died. Only in 1985 did the military allow them to move about freely. Gabriel Ximenes became a successful coffee trader.

291. The Commission received many other accounts of forced displacement where isolated communities were made to move by the Indonesian military for security reasons. In the table below a selection of accounts from community discussions is summarised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Location and Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAVR Community</td>
<td>Rotutu, Same,</td>
<td>About 800 people from the village of Rotutu were forcibly moved by ABRI to Raifusa (Alas, Manufahi), Aileu and Aileu because they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile</td>
<td>Manufahi 1981</td>
<td>were suspected of being in contact with Falintil in the forest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAVR Community</td>
<td>Caicasa, Fatuberliu,</td>
<td>The people of the village of Caicasa were forcibly moved by ABRI to Welaluhu. Many died of malaria and hunger, and eventually the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile</td>
<td>Manufahi 1981</td>
<td>people were moved back to Fatuberliu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAVR Community</td>
<td>Soibada, Manatuto</td>
<td>F58, the deputy governor, and ABRI forced about 57 families from Soibada to move to the village of Manehat to build ABRI posts there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAVR Community</td>
<td>Fatisi, Laulara,</td>
<td>The people of the village of Fatisi were forcibly moved, some being taken to Dili and some to Aileu Town, because the village was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile</td>
<td>Aileu 1984</td>
<td>suspected of being a Falintil base. As a result of the forcible transfer, the village was uninhabited between 1984 and 1990.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Retaliatory internment and collective punishment: Ataúro and other internment camps

292. Uprisings (levantamentos) against the Indonesian military in the 1980s precipitated an Indonesian military response that produced a new form of internment. People taken to the camps included those who were directly involved in the uprisings, although most of them fled to the mountains immediately after the attacks. A large number of the detainees were relatives of those
who had attacked the military posts. Often entire villages bore the brunt of the Indonesian retaliation, making their internment a form of collective punishment. The interrogation and torture of people involved in the attacks (and sometimes their relatives) was brutal and protracted, and often ended in death (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances).

**Ataúro internments**

293. The most notorious and the largest of these internment camps was the island of Ataúro (Dili). The Commission received evidence from a wide variety of sources on the number of people held on Ataúro at different times. It has concluded that the displaced and detainee population of the island peaked in around September 1982 at just over 4,000, although various sources have put the figure much higher and cumulatively the number of people transported to Ataúro between 1980 and 1984 may well have exceeded 6,000.\(^1\) Graph Ataúro gTSVInsInAtaúroM1100

294. Internment on the island of Ataúro was a unique case. Because of its isolation from the mainland, it did not require the tight security measures imposed in the resettlement camps and relocation villages discussed above.\(^2\) Ataúro served a dual role as internment camp for families of Resistance fighters and detention for individuals directly involved in the Resistance (see Chapter 7.4: Detention, Torture and Ill-Treatment). No clear or consistent reasons for these forced relocations were given by authorities. No judicial or formal administrative process to support the internments were in evidence. Instead, the majority of those transported to Ataúro were generally people, including women and children, who had been picked up in large groups after attacks on military posts by the Resistance or as part of military operations intended to eliminate the Resistance. By contrast the number of people who were arrested as active members of the clandestine movement and transported to Ataúro was relatively small.\(^3\)

\(^1\) The data given in Amnesty International, East Timor: Violations of Human Rights (p. 71), based on a variety of public and confidential sources, show the number of people held on Ataúro at different times between mid-1980 and late 1984. Higher estimates from other sources ranged between 5,000 and 9,670, but these may have been estimates of the cumulative total [see CAVR Interview with Faustino Gomes da Sousa, Ataúro, Dili 1- November 2003; Ceu Lopes Federer, testimony to CAVR National Public Hearing on Political Imprisonment, Dili, 17-18 February 2003; and CAVR Interview with Luis da Costa Soares, Letefoho, Same, Manufahi, 23 February 2003].

\(^2\) The island of Ataúro was used as a prison island during the Portuguese colonial period. According to Vasco Lopes da Silva, in 1937 dissidents from Portugal and its colonies began to be exiled to Ataúro. After the Portuguese regained control of Timor at the end of the Second World War, many Timorese were sent to Ataúro for alleged collaboration with the Japanese.

\(^3\) One example is Marito Nicolau dos Reis, who was arrested in December 1980 with other members of a clandestine group operating in Ostico, Baucau, and sent to Ataúro for four months [CAVR Interview with Marito Nicolau dos Reis, Baucau, 17 November 2002]. Another is Adelino Soares, who was one of a group of nine members of a clandestine cell arrested in March 1982 in Uatu-Lari, Viqueque who were sent to Ataúro in May 1982 [CAVR Interview with Adelino Soares, Viqueque Town, 27 October 2003]. At least by March 1984, the Indonesian authorities seem to accept that those held on Ataúro comprised distinct groups. At that time detainees were classified as “detainees”, “former detainees” and “displaced persons” with the majority falling into the last category [Amnesty International, East Timor: Violations of Human Rights, 1985, pp. 65-66].
Forced displacement, internment or detention?

The people who were rounded up and brought against their will to the island of Ataúro used different terms to describe their experience. Some said that they were in exile on Ataúro. Others said they were detained or imprisoned there.

Human rights principles and international humanitarian law prohibit the arbitrary transfer of civilians. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that everyone has the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his or her residence. The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provide that every person has the right to be protected against arbitrary displacement from his or her home, including in situations of armed conflict. Where people do suffer displacement, authorities must ensure their well-being including their access to food, water, shelter and medical services.

Article 49 of the Geneva Convention IV prohibits an occupying power from carrying out individual or mass forcible transfers or deportations of the population. Internment of civilians can take place under special conditions. Article 78 of Geneva Convention IV states that decisions on internment have to be made according to a specified procedure, which includes the right of appeal for all parties involved and to have rulings regularly reviewed.

Ataúro internments: 1980

295. The former prisoners of Ataúro told the Commission that forced displacement to Ataúro was organised in waves. The first wave took place on 10 July and 3 September 1980, moving those allegedly involved in the guerrilla attack on the Marabia radio and television station and the Battalion 744 barracks in Becora, Dili on 10 June 1980. Bernardino Villanova described his experience to the Commission during its National Public Hearing on Political Imprisonment:

On 10 June 1980 I took part in the attack on Marabia. I was the Falintil contact in Lorosae region. First we attacked the Gedung Negara Lahane (Lahane Government Building), then we continued to the television tower in Marabia. The aim of the attack was to show that Fretilin still existed. On 11 June I was taken to the Kodim. I was told to go home, but then I was called back again. I hid in a church. But in the church there were members of the intelligence and I was taken again on 12 June.

[Recalling his detention and torture in Mes Korem, Kartika Sari (SGI headquarters in Colmera) and Comarca Balide]

On 3 September 1980 I was put in a black car at midnight and taken to Tacitolu. I didn’t know where I was being taken. From Tacitolu a navy ship took us to Ataúro. The first group included Commander Nahak and his family. In the second group there was me and 13 other people including Custódio, Tarzizu, Alfredo, Geraldo, Vicente Simões, Domingos Santos, Domingos Santos from Becora, Bernadino from Lacoto. In the third group were José Soares Guterres and Maria Fatima. There weren’t many in the second group, so we stayed with the locals. We were told to live near the Koramil.

--

1 Casimiro Suriano da Silva gave evidence to the Commission about the detention and forced displacement of his family and others, a total of 9 persons, after his son was implicated in the Marabia incident in 1980 [HRVD Statement 01498].
In Atauro I moved freely but I had no contact with my family. We received very mouldy corn. Each family received equal rations, regardless of its size. The people of Atauro shared their soil with us, even though they were also hungry. We...helped them by working in their fields and received part of the harvest. People also gave us land to work on. I was forced, with the 13 others involved in Marabia case, to work the fields in Beloi which were not very fertile. Armed soldiers kept us under guard. In 1983 I was declared “free” but there was still a very long rope tying me. I decided that I would stay on Atauro.²⁶⁵

Atauro internments 1981

296. In 1981 another wave of mass transfers occurred, mainly of people from the eastern districts of Baucau, Viqueque and Lautém. Most of these people were transferred during August-November 1981. It therefore partly overlapped with Operation Kikis, the “fence of legs” operation in which 60,000 civilian East Timorese civilians were mobilised to converge on Falintil (see Part 3: The History of the Conflict). The transportation of people to Atauro appears to have been part of an overall strategy for destroying the Resistance by eliminating its fighting forces through Operation Kikis and removing its support base by sending them into exile on Atauro.

297. The Commission received evidence that around 300 families were moved to Atauro from the 15 villages in the sub-district of Quelicai (Baucau) alone.²⁶⁶ One person in this group was Joana Pereira. Having lost her parents to hunger and disease in 1978 while the family was living in the mountains, Joana Pereira was forcibly moved to Atauro from her village of Laculio (Quelicai, Baucau). She described to the Commission her and her brother’s experience as orphans brought to the island:

On 29 August 1981 the Koramil commander said: “Those who still have family members in the forest will be punished.” He then made a list. After couple of days I saw lists of names that were put on the board in front of the village office. By then I knew that we would be imprisoned on Atauro. I was only 13 years old, and my brother Mateus Pereira was only 9 years old. We were to be imprisoned on Atauro because our brother Pascoal Pereira (Nixon) was still was still in the forest. On 30 August 1981 the Koramil [commander] of Quelicai forced us, under tight guard, onto four military trucks and brought us to the port in Laga (Baucau). We stayed there for a day and a night. Then we were brought to Dili in a warship numbered 502. On this ship there were other families from Seiçal, Buibau, Quelicai and Laga.
When we arrived in Dili, ABRI soldiers gave us some food in buckets. I made Mateus take some for both of us, since we had not eaten...on 1 September, we were boarded on another warship, number 511. We left at 8.00am and arrived around 12.00 noon. When we disembarked at the Ataúro port, the Ataúro Koramil commander and other prisoners who had arrived earlier greeted us...the Koramil [commander] of Ataúro made us stand in line, and our names were listed one by one. After that we were brought to our prison. When we got there, my brother and I were separated. I don’t know why, but he lived in Barracks Number 22 together with 60 other people and I lived with 70 other people in Barracks Number 24. We were put in barracks with nothing in them. There was a zinc roof and the walls were made of tarpaulin. There were no beds. In the beginning we were given no food by the military. Mateus and I only ate the food we brought from Quelicali. One month later we received an allocation of three small tins of maize from a soldier. Each family received this much once every fortnight.

These conditions caused famine. Many people from Lospalos and Viqueque died. Between two and five people died every day, especially small children and old women and men.267

298. Hermenegildo da Cruz was a member of the Indonesian district parliament [DPRD II] in Viqueque and the Liurai of Ossu (Viqueque). He described to the Commission a ceremony in 1981 to send off 700 families to Ataúro from villages in the sub-districts of Viqueque, Ossu, Uatu-Lari, Uatu-Carbau, and Lacluta (all Viqueque), and Barique (Manatuto). The deportees to be were gathered in a soccer field for the ceremony, which was attended by the sub-regional military commander (Danrem), the head of the provincial parliament (DPRD I), the district administrator (Bupati) of Viqueque, his deputy (the Sekwilda), the district military commander (Danrem), and other military and civilian officials. The Danrem explained to Hermenegildo da Cruz that although 700 families were to be moved to Ataúro, only about 32 families had strong connections to Fretilin/Falintil. Hermenegildo recalled that the Sub-district administrator (Camat) of Lacluta, Antonio Vicente Marques Soares, intervened during the ceremony and succeeded in preventing the people from Lacluta being moved to Ataúro. He told the Commission of the plight of those who were interned on Ataúro:

Many of those people from Viqueque died on Ataúro due to the hunger, disease and change in climate. Old people and children died every day, until the ICRC were finally able to provide assistance in 1982. In 1985 and 1986 people began to return to Viqueque, although many chose to stay elsewhere.268

The Kablaki uprising

299. After the 20 August 1982 uprising in the Kablaki area, more than 600 people from Mauchiga, Dare, Nunumoge, Mulo and Hatu Builico (in Ainaro) and Rotutu (in Manufahi) were brought to Ataúro.

300. Abilio dos Santos, from Mauchiga, was detained by the Indonesian military on 10 July 1982 after he attended a secret meeting to organise the uprising. Despite his capture with 15 others, the uprising still took place. In retaliation, Indonesian forces destroyed Mauchiga, burning
all the houses, food stores and killing all livestock. The whole village of Mauchiga was evacuated. Some were killed in Builico, others were detained in Dare, Dotik, Ainaro and Ataúro (see Part 6: Profile of Human Rights Violations; Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances; Chapter 7.4: Detention, Torture and Ill-Treatment; Chapter 7.7: Sexual Violence).

301. Abilio dos Santos was among those brought to Ataúro. He and the 14 of the 15 who had been arrested in July were taken to the Balide Prison in Dili on 29 August 1982 by the Indonesian military. The other member of the group, Ernesto, had been shot dead shortly after their arrest. Two days later, at three in the morning, they were taken to the Dili port. There they were told:

The state is not punishing you. The state must evacuate you because your area is not secure. If the people of Dare and Mauchiga stay in their villages, and there is an Indonesian soldier or Hansip killed, then you would be killed. That is why we are taking you to Ataúro now.

302. The Commission has received a list of 373 names of people from the village of Mauchiga who were forcibly displaced to the island of Ataúro in 1982, including 73 people who died on the island between 1982 and 1987.

Conditions on Ataúro

303. People were held on the barren island in makeshift bare barracks in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions. Plaçido Lisboa was forcibly moved from Viqueque to Ataúro on 15 November 1981. He described the living conditions:

There were two settlements at that time. One barracks was 12 by 6 metres, for one Neighbourhood Unit (Rukun Tetangga, RT) of 80 to 90 families. There were usually six rooms in one barracks, and each room had six families. There were 45 barracks on Ataúro. Between the church in Vila and the junior secondary school (SMP) there were 32 barracks; from the market to the end of the road, 13 more barracks. The reason we were moved [there] was to be “secured”, so we wouldn’t support people in the mountains.

304. There was little food or fresh water, and starving internees were forced to survive on what wild roots and fruits they could collect around the camp or beg or steal from the local community. They also collected small fish and shellfish on the beach at low tide. According to witnesses, Indonesian officials distributed corn to each family, but the amount and quality was not sufficient for survival. According to Adelino Soares, who later became the local health coordinator of the ICRC’s aid programme, between 300 and 350 people died in the early years of their time in Ataúro, before the arrival of aid from the ICRC in 1982. This was confirmed by Faustino Gomes de Sousa, a native of Ataúro and currently the village head in Vila (Ataúro, Dili), who as a child witnessed the situation of the deportees:

I remember seeing 5 to 6 children dying every day from diarrhoea. They were all buried at the back of the barracks. There used to be gravestones to mark their graves but a flood and landslide in 1998 washed all the graves away.

\[\text{Footnotes}\]

1 Submission to CAVR, List of victims from Mauchiga. The people of Mauchiga were also forcibly moved to Dare (Builico, Ainaro), Dotik (Manufahi).

2 CAVR Interview with Adelino Soares, Villa, Ataúro, Dili, 7 March 2002. Corroboration from Rui de Araújo who cites 319 deaths in Ataúro in CAVR Interview with Rui de Araújo, Maumeta Atauro Dili 27 October 2003
305. Ceu Lopes Federer, another local from the island of Ataúro, also joined the ICRC effort to assist the internees. She described the living conditions in the barracks, where each room housed 5 to ten families. An outbreak of cholera resulted in scores of children and adults dying. She told the Commission:

The little children were dying like ants, like flies. The mothers would call out to their [dead] children through the night. Some wanted to kill themselves, going out of their minds, their breasts full of milk.\(^ {274} \)

306. Luis da Costa Soares was a carpenter and member of the clandestine movement, working in the area of Tutuluro (Same and Ainaro). In 1982, after the 20 August uprising in Mauchiga, he was detained and eventually brought to Ataúro. His transfer from Manufahi was handled by the district military command (Kodim) in Same and provincial military command (Korem) in Dili. He told the Commission:

The situation on the island of Ataúro was very difficult, particularly for those from eastern areas such as Baucau and Viqueque, and Lospalos [and also those from] Dili, Aileu, Ainaro and Manatuto Districts. Many died, mostly children and old people. Five to six people died a day. There was hunger, mental depression and malnutrition. People were traumatised...This situation continued for about one year, until the arrival of the ICRC [when] the deaths began to decrease.\(^ {275} \)

Civilian detainees

307. The majority of people brought to Ataúro were not political detainees, nor were they armed Resistance fighters. For the most part the people who found themselves on Ataúro were ordinary villagers from areas where Fretilin/Falintil was considered to be active. “Separating the fish from the water” was a phrase often used by Indonesian military authorities to explain the strategy of mass removal of the population.\(^ {276} \) The following table presents a selection of testimonies given to the Commission by survivors of the Ataúro island prison camp:

**Table 11 - A selection of testimonies of survivors of Ataúro**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Name and Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HRVD 00047</td>
<td>An East Timorese man Dili</td>
<td>In June 1980, after the Marabia incident, the deponent was captured by Battalion 744 soldiers, along with two women. They were brought to Ataúro and placed under the control of the Koramil commander, Suryana. The two women were sexually violated by soldiers at the Koramil. The deponent cited 5,000 detainees in Ataúro. Many died of hunger and lack of medicine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRVD 05668</td>
<td>Paulo Soares, Viqueque, Viqueque</td>
<td>Paulo Soares, with four others (Builou, Gamalu'u, Lorenço Soares and Lorenço) were captured by the intelligence section (Kasi 1) of the Viqueque Kodim and brought to Ataúro. They experienced hunger every day on Ataúro, eating only sago and corn from the church. There was not enough food for all those brought to Ataúro. Lorenço died from hunger and lack of medicine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRVD 06489</td>
<td>Maria Soares, Ailili, Manatuto, Manatuto</td>
<td>Maria Soares and her cousin, Juliana Soares, were arrested by Hansip at their home in Malarahun. They were detained at the Manatuto Kodim for two nights then brought to the Dili port. The following day they were transported to Ataúro where they stayed for 4 years. The reason was because her three sons remained in the forest with Falintil forces. She suffered from lack of food during her time in Ataúro.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leaving Ataúro – but not always returning home

308. The ICRC’s humanitarian aid programmes that began in 1982 alleviated much of the immediate suffering. Witnesses speak of a slow decrease of the number of deaths due to the regular distribution of aid and provision of medical care. Conditions improved to the extent that the Indonesian authorities allowed international observers to visit the island in 1982, including journalists from Portugal and the former Prime Minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam.

309. According to statements received by the Commission in 1983 the Indonesian military began to return people in large numbers from Ataúro after pressure from the ICRC. As with their original deportation to the island, they were returned in groups. The first group to be returned were from Baucau. One year later, in 1984, the internees from Lautém were allowed to go home. People from Viqueque were returned between 1986 and 1987. Everyone else was returned by 1987 except for 17 families who chose to stay on Ataúro. 

310. The suffering of those who had been interned on Ataúro did not end with their release. Many of them experienced discrimination and hardship after their return. SL was a single mother whose husband was a Falintil soldier in the mountains. While in detention, but before being sent to Ataúro, she was raped. She and her two sons, then aged four and six, survived the hardships on Ataúro, and with the help of ICRC were returned home to Same. SL told the Commission:
My husband and four of our children ran to the forest. I stayed behind with our other children. In 1981, during Operation Kikis in Aitana, I was detained in an ABRI post for seven months, with three other women. An Indonesian military commander raped me and a colleague of his raped my sister-in-law, even though she was pregnant at the time. They raped us for seven months... We were moved to the Same Kodim, then my children and I were moved to Atauro... We were imprisoned on Atauro for four years, seven months and seven days... on Atauro it was terrible, there was no food. With the help of ICRC, we were returned to Same. But the people there would not accept us. They called us batar fuhuk (rotten corn). They said we were Fretilin and they wouldn't give us food.²⁸⁰

311. Ermelinda Nogueira was released from Atauro with members of her family in 1982, where she had been sent because she had relatives who were fighting in the forest. She returned to her home in Maluro (Lore I, Maluro, Lautém). Not long after her release she was caught up in the backlash against the levantamentos of August 1983. Because she still had relatives in the forest she was brought to the ABRI post in Maluro with four of her children where she was interrogated and tortured for two days, including by being given electric shocks, hung upside down and beaten by the post commander. Soon after this two other members of her family were arrested and disappeared. Nine months later her husband, Carolino, was arrested and tortured by the local Babinsa by being beaten with a rifle butt on his face, head and chest. He was so badly injured as a result of this treatment that when the Babinsa summoned him again, he was unable to go. When Ermelinda Nogueira went in his place, the Babinsa threatened to kill her before releasing her.²⁸¹

312. Others returned from Atauro only to find that while they had been interned, relatives who had been fighting with Falintil had been killed or disappeared.²⁸²

313. Yet others were brought back to the mainland from Atauro only to be relocated to another internment camp. The locations included Bonuk (Manufahi), Cailaco (Bobonaro) and Dare (Ainaro).

314. Among these new camps the one in Kale in the village of Purogoa (Cailaco, Ermera) was used for the longest period.²⁸³ For example, João Bosco from Bucoli (Baucau, Baucau) was detained by members of Kopassanda (Special Forces) in 1982. He was interrogated at the Hotel Flamboyan in the town of Baucau for three days, and then moved to a location in Fatumaca, then back again to the Hotel Flamboyan. He was then taken by military plane to Dili and detained at the Battalion 744 headquarters. After nine days, he was taken to Atauro where he stayed for three years. In 1985, he was "released" but brought to Cailaco (Bobonaro). Three years later he was returned to his village with the assistance from the ICRC.²⁸⁴

315. Felijarda Florinda Pereira, Domingos da Silva, Natércia da Silva and Dirce Fatima Corsila were also relocated to Cailaco (Bobonaro) after their time in Atauro. They stayed in Cailaco for another three years and finally returned to their village in Ossoala (Vemasse, Baucau) in 1986. They never saw their fathers or husbands again.²⁸⁵

Sexual violation and starvation in Bonuk (Ainaro)

316. For those brought to Bonuk from Atauro the situation went from bad to worse. SL (from Hatu Builico, Ainaro) was forcibly displaced to Atauro in 1982 after her husband fled back to the mountains. She was there for two years and two months, during which time her eldest child died due to lack of medical care. From Atauro she was brought to Bonuk. She was intimidated by
soldiers from the local Koramil and raped by a Hansip. She became pregnant and had a child from the sexual violations she experienced.285

317. Mário de Araújo gave evidence to the Commission about his internment in Ataúro between 1982 and 1985 and subsequent removal to Bonuk. During the two months he was held in Bonuk he saw eight people die from hunger and malaria.287

318. Abílio dos Santos told the Commission how when he and about 30 others were being returned from Bonuk by truck, they were ordered to get down in an area called Mau-ulo III, near Builico in the town of Ainaro. There were some make-shift houses already prepared by the military, surrounded by Hansip guard posts. They lived there for one and a half months, without receiving any assistance except for a few hand-outs from the local priest.288

319. The people of Mauchiga who had been interned on Ataúro were not returned to their original villages, but made to stay in the sub-district town of Dare (Hatu Builico, Ainaro) where hundreds had already been displaced in the aftermath of the 20 August uprising in 1982. The sudden influx of people to Dare brought about another crisis in food security. They were finally allowed to return to their homes three years after their forced relocation to Dare.
Displacement, violence, and hunger in Dare

Amelia de Jesus testified about her experiences during the three years she and many others from Mauchiga were forcibly displaced in Dare after the Failintil attack of 20 August 1982. The following text is excerpts of her testimony to the Commission:

On 20 August 1982 the guerillas entered Mauchiga and we helped them by giving them food. When Indonesian soldiers later came to our village they burned all the houses. My family and I hid in the caves, with 29 other people including children, women and men. We stayed there for about one week. My son, Bernadino Tilman, a teacher, was shot dead when he went down to Mauchiga to look for food.

Four days later Hansip and the Indonesian military found us. They had brought gasline to burn the grass. They asked: "Who told you to hide here? The people in the forest? Are Falintil hiding weapons here?" So finally I left the hiding place. They told us to leave all our belongings and food. Throughout the journey to Dare we were verbally abused.

We were taken to the primary school in Dare and they kept us there. When we got there, they took down our names and gave them to the Koramil. The name of the Koramil commander at the time was Rusu. While we were in the school, we were treated very harshly. I was there with my husband Alarico Tilman and two of my children Angelita da Silva (one-and-a-half years old) and Alexito Araujo (9 months old). At the end of August a Hansip, F40, stabbed my husband until he bled. Another Hansip, Paulo, a man from Mauchiga who also happened to be our relative, helped us. He told them "don’t hurt my uncle", and said that we had better give them something. So my husband gave a surik (traditional sword) and a tais (traditional woven cloth) to a soldier to save our family.

One night a group of Hansip forced their way in by breaking the door open. They ordered me to come out for questioning. I realised that they actually wanted to rape me. My husband said: "You go out, so you won’t be killed." Indonesian soldiers came, their faces masked so that only their eyes were visible. They yelled: "Come out, come out." I held on to my husband’s arms and didn’t let go. They pulled my hair and hit me, but I didn’t let go of my husband. They hit my head and back. I shouted: "Let us both die, but let my children live." So finally they gave up and left us.

While we were in the school, we had to find our own food. Every morning we were taken out to look for food…They [Indonesian soldiers] followed carrying weapons.

During that time people died from two things: hunger and night-time interrogations. At night at the school, we weren’t allowed to go out. We had to relieve ourselves in a can and clean it up in the morning. We slept on a cement floor stained with blood. The blood was from those who had been detained there earlier. So many people died. Some were burned alive. Some were thrown into the river. Hundreds from villages nearby were detained there. Every night they took women to rape them. They said "to get information," but actually they were raped. This was done to girls and mothers. They were called and raped in the forest near the school.

Then we were allowed to stay with my father in Dare. But every night, Hansips and the people were required to do night watch, including my husband. About three years later people were returned from Dotik and Ataúro, causing another period of hunger in Dare. We weren’t free to plant crops, and we had to have a travel pass if we wanted to go to Ainaro, Suai or Maubisse. Every time we worked the gardens, they [Indonesian soldiers] followed holding weapons. We remained hungry, because there wasn’t enough land for such a dense population. We lived like this for three years.

Alternatives to internment on Ataúro: Raifusa and Dotik
320. In addition to places of detention in Dare, Ainaro, Aileu and Ataúro, inhabitants of the villages around Mauchiga were also sent to Raifusa (Betano, Same, Manufahi) and Dotik (Alas, Manufahi) after the 20 August uprising. In some cases, after their release from Ataúro, detainees did not return to their place of origin, but instead joined those already in Dotik and Raifusa.

**Dotik (Manufahi)**

321. After the 20 August incident hundreds of villagers fled to Mount Kablaki in the hope of escaping the expected reprisals. They were eventually rounded up and detained at the Same Kodim and Koramil. From there they were eventually brought to Dotik, a village south of Alas on the southern coast of Manufahi.

322. Laurinda dos Santos, told the Commission how, when they heard of the Falintil attack, she and 95 other villagers fled to Mount Kablaki. They were pursued by by Indonesian forces who shot one of them, Domingos Lobato, and captured the rest. They were detained in Same for one week, before being moved to Dotik.293

323. UL later joined those already in Dotik. She had managed to evade capture for three months, living with about 30 other families on the mountain. They were captured and brought to the Rotutu Koramil, then transferred to the Kodim in Same, where they were interrogated. She told the Commission that she was transported in a convoy of ten military trucks to Dotik. When they arrived there, there was no shelter for them. They had to stay in the houses already built by the internees, or build their own. UL told the Commission how she two other young women in her family were frequently raped by soldiers during the three years that she was in Dotik.290

324. After being captured in November 1982 and held for one month in the Same Kodim, João de Araújo was reunited with his wife and children in Dotik. He described the living conditions there:

> We were just dumped there without being told where we should live. The village head gave us some land on which we built our homes. We were about 100 people, but so many died during this time from shortages of food and medicine. We were sick from mosquito bites. Initially we had no food to eat. Luckily some of the families already living there gave us some cassava and sago so we could survive for a few months. After a few months ABRI came and gave us agricultural tools so we could plant food.291

325. João de Araújo lived in Dotik for three years. Mário Viegas Carrascalão, then the provincial governor, visited the people in Dotik in 1984 and promised to secure their release. João de Araújo told the Commission that the Governor sent some food to them but the army swapped the rice for corn. In 1985 they were brought to the Dare Koramil where they lived for another two years, before being allowed to return to their homes in Mauchiga.

326. While he was in Dotik, Januari de Araújo and others were ordered to go out and find a Falintil commander and his men, and was told that if they did not succeed, their families would be killed:
When we got to Rotutu, they took our machetes and did not return them when we reached this abandoned place called Dotik. We were given two weeks to build our own houses, or else we would be killed. We were given only two sacks of corn, which had the letters USAID written on it. Troops from Same guarded us. After two weeks we had built our homes and guard posts for the platoon. There they were put in a dark cell for four nights Forty-three men were ordered back to Same and given the task of finding a Falintil commander and his men there they were put in a dark cell for four nights. We were told that if we succeeded then our families in Dotik would live. If not, they would die. We spent two weeks in Kablaki but did not succeed. They spent 2 weeks in Kablaki but did not find the commander.

Later people from Ainaro, who had been released from Ataúro, were brought to Dotik for a few months before being moved to Dare. Candida Pinto told the Commission that the group with which she returned from Ataúro was sent to Lafukar in Dotik (Alas, Manufahi) by the Ainaro Kodim, which refused to let them resettle in Mauchiga:

[Lafukar] was completely uninhabited. Seventeen people died from lack of food during the three months of our stay there.  

Raifusa (Betano, Same, Manufahi)

The Commission was told that many of the people of Rotutu (Same, Manufahi) were forcibly displaced to Raifusa. This occurred as reprisal for a raid by local Hansip and Falintil on 20 August 1982, the same day as the attack on Mauchiga, on the offices of the village Babinsa and Bimpolda in which a number of weapons had been taken. People from Mauchiga were also brought to Raifusa. Most of those displaced to Raifusa from Rotutu and Mauchiga were brought there almost directly after the 20 August 1982 uprising, following a brief stop at the Same Kodim. A few were brought to Raifusa after years of internment on the island of Ataúro. As in Dotik the conditions in Raifusa were harsh. The Commission received statements from survivors describing their own suffering and the deaths of others during their internment in Raifusa.

An East Timorese man told the Commission how his family were forcibly displaced to Raifusa after a number of human rights violations including the rape of his wife by Hansip and the Babinsa, and the beating of a group of young men. According to the man:

There was a decision by ABRI that all the people of Rotutu were to be moved to Raifusa to make it easier for the authorities to control the population and prevent them from contacting Fretilin. We were hungry in the new location. Two of my family members, Paulo da Silva and Francelina dos Santos, died from lack of food and medicine.

After the incident in Rotuto Domingos Melo, a member of Hansip who had not participated in the raid, was arrested and brought to the Same Kodim where he was detained for three months. While there he was beaten with a stick and his knee was stabbed with a knife. After being released he found that all the people of Rotutu had been moved to Raifusa. He joined them but found the living conditions in Raifusa very difficult. The people of Rotutu are mountain people

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1 CAVR Interview with Januari de Araújo, Mauchiga, Ainaro 4 June 2003; HRVD Statement 07200 [José Rosa de Araújo] corroborated the practice of forcibly recruiting civilians in operations to look for Falintil. He gave evidence of the killing of two civilians by ABRI during such operations.
and were unaccustomed to the coastal lowlands. One of the victims of the inhospitable environment was Domingos Melo’s wife, Constantina Soares, who died there from disease.  

331. The vulnerability of those displaced to Raifusa is evident in a number of testimonies.  

332. Armando Borsa also told the Commission how he and seven others were detained one week after being forcibly moved to Raifusa from their village in Rotutu. They were beaten and interrogated at Same Kodim, and finally released 11 days later, but only after giving their captors took traditional jewellery (belak) and a chicken.  

333. In 1982 the ICRC began to provide aid in Dotik and Raifusa. Saturnino Tilman was employed as a health worker in the malaria prevention programme. He remembers that even after ICRC began relief work in Raifusa, the mortality rate was still high. People died of tuberculosis, malaria, marasmus (beri-beri), diarrhoea and cholera.  

334. Joaquim da Silva and his wife Alexandrina were captured by Hansip in their home in Rotutu. They were brought to the Same Kodim where both were interrogated. Joaquim da Silva was released, but his wife and their children were sent to Ataúro for five years. On Ataúro their daughter, Frentelina da Silva, died. Alexandrina was eventually moved to Raifusa, with her two remaining children. Both children died in Raifusa from lack of food.  

335. Eventually the people displaced to Raifusa were allowed to return to their home villages in 1986. A number of families chose to continue to live in the government-supported local transmigration locations called SP1, SP2, SP3 in Colacau, Besusu and Dotik. During the Commission’s research in Raifusa, witnesses showed Commission staff a graveyard with approximately 800 gravestones which they believe is where the dead from Rotutu and Mauchiga were buried.  

Lalarek Mutin (Viqueque)  

336. In Kraras (Viqueque) on 8 August 1983, 14 Indonesian soldiers from the combat engineering battalion, Zipur 9, were killed in an uprising of Rath, the village civil defence force. This incident brought about a protracted military response throughout the district of Viqueque that involved widespread detentions and mass executions (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances). The people of Kraras who survived, most of whom were women, were moved to a new location called Lalerek Mutin.  

337. The people of Kraras had already experienced forced displacement and its harsh consequences. They were originally from the village of Bibileo, which in 1970, at the time of the last Portuguese census had had a population of 3,000. The people of Bibileo fled to the mountains in the 1977 as the Indonesian forces advanced into their area. They surrendered in the town of Viqueque in 1979, and were in an area of the town called Beloi. According to José Gomes, restricted movements and lack of basic provisions caused 1 to 2 people to die each day in Beloi. In 1980 they were about to move back to Bibileo, but at the last minute were moved to a new location called Kraras. Kraras was considerably more fertile than Bibileo, and the community were initially content to resumer their agricultural activities.  

338. In testimony to the Commission José Gomes described the background to the Rath attack on 8 August 1983. The killing of seven civilians by soldiers from Battalion Zipur 4, including during the period of the ceasefire between Falintil and the Indonesian forces, and persistent cases of sexual violation and harassment had raised tensions in the village to the point where they exploded in the violence of 8 August. After the killings the population of Kraras fled to the villages of Luca, and Buikarin, to the town of Viqueque and into the mountains, knowing that the repercussions would be harsh. The Commission received evidence about the series of massacres and mass executions that followed, including the massacre on 17 September 1983 in
the area of Tahubein in the village of Buikarin, in which as many as 181 people are believed to have been killed (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances).

**Creation of Lalerek Mutin**

339. The survivors from the village of Kraras gathered together from Buikarin, Luca and Viqueque and moved to Lalerek Mutin (Luca), a previously uninhabited area due to its extremely hot, dry climate and infertile soil. On arrival in September 1983, they were ushered into make-shift barracks built by the military. Rita Amaral da Costa told the Commission:

> There was no office, not even a house then. It was an empty place, just forest. Food was difficult to come by. No shelter. All our farming tools—our hoes, machetes and so on—had all been taken by ABRI. We were able to use only a broken old machete, which had been left there. We used it to cut the bushes and tall grass to clear new land. We built a simple garden hut for temporary shelter. For something to sleep on we cut branches and arranged them on the ground, then on top we placed spliced bamboo, and we slept on top of it. We looked for old fallen coconuts to eat. We’d split the coconuts with used tools. We used a pickaxe and the used machete in turns trying not to be detected. For the children we had to find food from sago trees. We would cut down a sago tree from morning until late at night, and would only managed to do one tree. We would first take the fresh part of the sago, boil and eat it. Then we would peel off the skin and cut it in small pieces to be dried, while waiting for the pounding tool (oro) to be made. After it was finished, we’d begin pounding and process it into flour, only then we’d be able to feed our children.

> We were left for two months [not under the control of security apparatus]. Only then a Nanggala [member of Kopasandha—Special Forces] and several Hansip from Buikarin were assigned in Lalerek Mutin. It was then that ABRI began pressuring and forcing people to work on building the village of Lalerek Mutin. We were forced to cut and carry lumber, build houses, work the fields and do other such work. During the daytime we worked on village projects while at night we did night watches and guard duties around the village, both the men and the women.  

340. The new inhabitants of Lalerek Mutin were mainly women, children and elderly men. The able-bodied men had either been killed, had run to the mountains, or had disappeared. The women of Lalerek Mutin spoke of the hardship they faced during the first years of their lives in Lalerek Mutin. They were made to do “men’s work”—such as planting, constructing public buildings and taking part in security operations. At least four women became victims of sexual violence perpetrated by members of the Indonesian military (see Chapter 7.7: Sexual Violence).

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1 Olinda Pinto Martins gave evidence to the Commission that 17 men were boarded on a truck, under the premise of fetching food from Kraras, never to be seen again. In the CAVR National Public Hearing on Women and Conflict (28-29 April 2003), Beatriz Miranda Guterres spoke about her husband being recruited as a TBO and never to return. [Corroboration in HRVD Statement 00155. See also CAVR Interview with Honorio Soares de Gonzaga, Lalerek Mutin, Viqueque, 30 May 2003].
Extreme conditions

341. The residents of Lalerek Mutin lived in conditions of severe deprivation and close surveillance: no accessible source of clean water; strict security control of all movements; compulsory attendance at morning and afternoon roll-call; restricted communication with any persons from neighbouring villages; no medical care; and permits required for anyone wanting to travel more than 200 metres away from the village centre. The most severe deprivation was the lack of food. The people of Kraras came with no food, received none from the military, and had been left without agricultural tools.

342. Domingos Rangel was in school in Viqueque when the Kraras incident occurred. He and nine members of his family fled to the mountains, fearing retaliation from the army. After three months on Mount Bibileo, he and his family surrendered in Lacluta (Viqueque) where he witnessed his uncle being tortured under interrogation. A day later they were put on an army truck and taken to Lalerek Mutin. Domingos told the Commission:

   I remember four or five people dying every day. We just wrapped them in mats and buried them.\textsuperscript{304}

Forced food destruction

343. One of the operations internees were forced to participate in was curlog, the Indonesian abbreviation for penghancuran logistik or destruction of all food sources. The curlog operations were organised by Chandrasa 7 Group 2, a Kopassandha unit (Special Forces). Soldiers and Hansip would go out with the people once or twice a week. Before going out, everyone was required to assemble and be counted. No one was allowed to walk alone. Wherever they found coconuts, bananas, papaya, breadfruit, jackfruit or other fruit trees, they would take all the fruit and then have to cut down the trees. The purpose was to deny Falintil access to food supplies. When they returned to the village, everyone had to assemble and be counted again. Some people did not mind doing this because it was an opportunity for them to go outside and find food. However, it also had the result that fruit trees were destroyed and these resources lost for the future.

344. In 1984 José Gomes, as the village head of Lalerek Mutin, was asked by the military to conduct a census of the village population. He counted approximately 1,300 people, many less than the 3,000 who had been living in Bibileo in 1970. He believes that more than 1,000 persons died between the events in Kraras and the census. The curlog operations only ended in December 1985 when the Chandrasa unit returned to Java. Around this time life in Lalerek Mutin began to improve as the people were able to resume their normal agricultural activities.\textsuperscript{305}

345. Lalerek Mutin remained closed to outside help, and never received assistance from the ICRC or CRS. It was known, popularly, as the “village of widows”. Access to Lalerek Mutin remained difficult even into the 1990s.

The uprisings in Lautém

346. Between 5 and 8 August 1983 hundreds of members of civil defence groups, including Wanra, Hansip, and other able-bodied men from the villages of Mehara (Tutuala, Lautém), Lore and Leuro (Lospalos, Lautém) and Serelau (Moro, Lautém), fled from their villages to join Falintil forces in the mountains. Many of the armed members of the civil defence groups carried their weapons with them into the forest. The villages from which the men fled were severely punished by the Indonesian army.\textsuperscript{306} In response to the mass defection, Indonesian soldiers gathered all the women and others who were left behind. The people of the town of Tutuala (Tutuala, Lautém) recalled what happened:
On 9 August 1983 the people of the aldeias of Loikero and Porlamano were forcibly moved from their homes by Indonesian soldiers from Territorial Units 515 and 641 and Commando Groups 1, 2 and 4, under the overall command of Second Lieutenant Toto (Airborne Infantry Battalion 100), to the elementary school and church buildings in Mehara. This was done to increase control by ABRI after the Mehara incident. Two people died from lack of food.  

347. An East Timorese woman told the Commission how she and the people of Mehara were loaded on to two military trucks and taken to Tutuala where they were interrogated about their contacts with Falintil. Another East Timorese woman whose husband was among those who ran to the mountains, recounted how she and hundreds of women were made to gather all their belongings, including food and livestock, to be relocated in the village centre in Mehara. They were made to live there for two months.

348. VL told the Commission about sexual violence committed against her by Indonesian soldiers from Infantry Battalion 100, about two months after the relocation:

After two months the soldiers from Infantry Battalion 100 ordered all the women whose husbands had run off to the forest to assemble...After all the women had gathered, they said: “Everyone can go home except for VL and WL. They must stay and be examined”...[We] were taken to the ABRI Infantry Battalion 100 post...Then they started beating and stripping us...from 6.00pm until 1.00am. They hit us with wooden sticks, they kicked, stripped and threatened us with weapons, ordering us to confess. We did not confess to anything because we did not know anything. [T]hat night an army intelligence officer (Kasi I) started to interrogate me while pulling out my pubic hairs one at a time...I remained silent although I was in great pain. Because I did not confess they became increasingly angry and beat me until blood was coming out of my nose and mouth. Then at 1.00am they stopped torturing me.

349. After the August incident, hundreds of people from the district of Lautém were moved to the island of Ataúro. Families from at least three villages in Iliomar, where a planned uprising had been prevented by divisions among the local Hansip, were forcibly removed to Ataúro. Gaspar Seixas, a community leader from the village of Iliomar (Iliomar, Lautém) told the Commission that about 300 families were rounded up and moved to Ataúro from the villages of Iliomar I and II. Fernando Amaral, from the village of Fual (Iliomar, Lautém), recalled that 300 families were brought to Ataúro, in the aftermath of the August uprising.

7.3.6 Displacement before and after the Popular Consultation, 1999

350. The fall from power of President Soeharto in May 1998 ushered in great changes in Indonesia and Timor-Leste. The demand for greater political freedom and democracy in Indonesia, known as Reformasi, was also taken up in Timor-Leste by the recently-formed CNRT, by students and youth, and by the broader East Timorese public. For the East Timorese, Reformasi opened up new horizons. As the Habibie Government began to define a new Indonesian position on Timor-Leste with its offer of a special status for the territory, these hopes quickened. Public demonstrations and debate put the Indonesian authorities on the defensive.
351. The most disturbing response of the Indonesian authorities to the new-found confidence of the independence movement was the formation, beginning in late 1998, of militia groups. These groups, ostensibly a spontaneous pro-integrationist backlash against the gathering momentum in favour of independence, were in fact the culmination of the Indonesian militarisation of East Timorese society (see Part 4.2: The Regime of Occupation: The Militarisation of East Timorese Society). By early 1999, soon after President Habibie had announced that the people of Timor-Leste could choose between continued integration with Indonesia and independence, well-armed militia groups had been formed in every district and had begun to terrorise the population. The proliferation of hand-made guns and modern weapons, in the hands of newly formed militia groups, fuelled a wave of violence. This began at the end of 1998, reached a peak in April 1999, tapered off between May and August during the months leading to the UN-supervised Popular Consultation, and culminated in the frenzy of violence and destruction that followed the announcement that the people of Timor-Leste had voted for independence.

352. The violence of the militia groups, often working openly with their TNI sponsors, resulted in human rights violations on a scale not seen since the late 1970s. Detentions, torture and ill-treatment, killings, sexual violence and forced recruitment all reached new peaks in 1999, as did displacement. During 1999 displacement occurred both as spontaneous flight from militia violence and intimidation, and as the organised movement of people from their homes and places where they had sought refuge. As in earlier years, displacement in all the variety of circumstances in which it occurred in 1999 had a severe impact on people’s ability to feed themselves, especially as the Indonesian authorities made a concerted effort to deny them humanitarian assistance.

353. From the mobilisation of the first militia groups in late 1998, violence and intimidation by the militias caused people to flee their homes. In the early months of 1999 militia attacks on pro-independence communities in villages and the attempted forced recruitment of a largely unwilling population to militia ranks was already causing the internal displacement of many thousands of East Timorese, who sought refuge in what they supposed to be the safety of churches, urban Dili, Falintil strongholds and inaccessible mountain and forest areas. In April, as the UN-sponsored negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia in New York entered their final phase and rallies and inaugurations were held to consolidate the militia structure, militia violence and the displacements that were its by-product reached new heights. In the months of campaigning leading up to the ballot on 30 August, there was a reduction in the number of people displaced from their homes. However, the lull in both violence and displacements was relative. Militia and TNI intimidation continued during the campaign, and although many of the displaced returned to their home areas to register and vote, they often did not return to their actual homes but to places that they hoped would provide safety, such as the church in Suai. The paroxysm of violence that occurred after the ballot caused the displacement of the overwhelming majority of the population of Timor-Leste, both through the organised deportations to West Timor of about 250,000 East Timorese and the internal flight of most of the remainder of the population. Both forms of displacement were again accompanied by widespread human rights violations of other kinds, including detention, torture and ill-treatment, sexual violence and killing, on a massive scale.

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Early signs (November 1998 to March 1999)

354. In June 1998 the newly appointed President Habibie launched the idea of “special autonomy” for Timor-Leste. Determined to see an internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor, Habibie’s Government entered into tripartite talks on this proposal with the UN and Portugal in August 1998. This initiative had major repercussions on the ground in Timor-Leste.
355. On 9 November 1998 Falintil forces attacked the Sub-district military headquarters (Koramil) in Alas (Manufahi). The attack resulted in the deaths of at least three Indonesian soldiers and nine Falintil soldiers and their supporters.\textsuperscript{312} For more detail on the Alas incident see Chapter 7.4: Detention, Torture and Ill-Treatment and Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and EnforcedDisappearances. The TNI launched a large-scale military operation in retaliation, attacking civilians and burning the homes of suspected independence supporters in the surrounding villages of Taitudak, Aituha (Alas, Manufahi), Manumera, and Lisu Ata (Turiscai, Manufahi).

356. The village head of Taitudak (Alas, Manufahi), Vicente Xavier, and the young men of the village ran off to the forest. A few days later they were discovered by soldiers from Airborne Infantry Battalion 744 and Vicente was shot dead. The troops ransacked people’s homes, their food supplies and livestock.\textsuperscript{313} Alcina Fernandes, the wife of Vicente Xavier, described to the Commission how she, along with others, sought refuge at the church:

\begin{quote}
In November 1998 I heard gunshots. I ran to the house. But my husband, Vicente Xavier, had already fled. So I ran to the church with my baby, and my house was burned and all our belongings were looted and stolen. Our livestock, such as horses, cows and pigs, were killed. After this I sought shelter in the school building. While I was staying in the school, the wives of soldiers assigned there came by and verbally abused me every day. [One day] the food I was cooking on the stove was tipped over [by them].\textsuperscript{314}
\end{quote}

357. One account described how the Sub-district administrator (Camat) moved the people from the church to the local school. They were only allowed to return to their homes on 20 December 1998, more than one month after the incident.\textsuperscript{315} An eyewitness, who was still a refugee in West Timor when the Commission took his statement, described the burning and looting:

\begin{quote}
On 12 November 1998 Timorese members of the Koramil in Alas, F1, F2 and their men burned the houses of civilians in Kampung Lurin, Kulutetuk, Hasbot and Kampung Natarwen. As a result of the house burnings a number of traditional items and people’s possessions were destroyed. The perpetrators also looted people’s property. I witnessed the burning of the first house. All the residents were told to leave the houses and the village.\textsuperscript{316}
\end{quote}

\begin{table}[h]
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\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
**Table 12** & **Popular Consultation and civilian displacement: key dates and events** \\
\hline
27 January 1999 & President Habibie announces that the people of Timor-Leste will directly determine whether they will accept or reject Special Autonomy \\
\hline
11 March 1999 & Agreement is reached between Portugal and Indonesia that the people of Timor-Leste will exercise their right to self-determination through a direct ballot \\
\hline
5 May 1999 & A tripartite agreement between Indonesia, Portugal and the UN gives the UN responsibility for administering the Popular Consultation \\
\hline
1 June 1999 & UNAMET arrives in Dili \\
\hline
16 July 1999 & Voter registration begins \\
\hline
5 August 1999 & Voter registration ends; 451,792 potential voters registered \\
\hline
14 August 1999 & Campaigning begins \\
\hline
30 August 1999 & Ballot day, 98.6% turn-out \\
\hline
4 September 1999 & Results of the ballot announced, 21.5% in favour of autonomy within Indonesia, 78.5% against. \\
\hline
12 September 1999 & Indonesia agrees to a multi-national force (Interfet) to restore order in the territory \\
\hline
20 September 1999 & Interfet arrives in East Timor \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
358. In response to these widespread retaliatory attacks, some people ran to the forest\textsuperscript{317}. Others sought safety in the relative anonymity of Dili. Luis Godinho Manuel da Costa, for example, told the Commission that after initially seeking refuge at the house of the local parish priest in the village of Liurai (Turiscal, Manufahi), he discovered the shallow grave of a local youth and fled to Dili until after the Popular Consultation. \textsuperscript{318}

359. By early January 1999 people from other districts were also forced to flee violence and intimidation. The Commission received reports of violent incidents which led to the flight of civilians in January 1999. Some people remained displaced for the whole period of the Popular Consultation-related violence. \textsuperscript{319} Most of the early reports of violence and displacement received by the Commission came from the district of Liquiça.

\section*{Liquiça}

360. In Liquiça, the newly formed Besi Merah Putih (BMP) militia were already active in early January 1999. Forced recruitment into the militia, particularly in the sub-district of Maubara, where the BMP had its headquarters, was one of the factors leading to displacement. An East Timorese man was abducted by five members of BMP militia in January 1999 in Maubara (Liquiça). He was slapped, beaten and forced to “guard” the BMP post for the following nine months. After the Popular Consultation he was forcibly deported to Atambua. He was in West Timor for one year before he returned home. \textsuperscript{320} Others fled their homes to avoid forced recruitment into the militia. \textsuperscript{321}

361. The Commission received statements describing a BMP attack in Maubara on 19 January 1999, causing many to flee to villages in the mountains such as Leotela (Liquiça, Liquiça). \textsuperscript{322}

362. Typically, those who were displaced in these early months stayed away from their homes until the arrival of Interfet in Timor-Leste in late September 1999. For example, on 16 February 1999, a local East Timorese BMP militia commander, F3, together with 35 militia men, captured Alarico Manuel and his family in Vatuboro (Maubara, Liquiça). They were held and beaten at the local health centre, then moved to the agriculture department’s housing complex in Cuico (Maubara, Liquiça). BMP militia attacked Cuico four days later on 23 February 1999. Alarico ran to Dili and sought protection at the house of Manuel Carrascalão in Lecidere. Over 100 displaced persons were in this house when Aitarak and BMP militia attacked it on 17 April 1999. \textsuperscript{323} Again, Alarico was detained in various places, this time by the Indonesian police. He was released by Interfet in Dili in late September. \textsuperscript{324}

\section*{Deaths by deprivation in Liquiça}

363. Although the humanitarian consequences of displacement in 1999 were less severe than those of the displacement and famine of the late 1970s, the Commission received reports of death by deprivation related to these displacements. Augusta da Costa Freitas was pregnant when BMP militia attacked her village of Vatuvou (Maubara, Liquiça). She fled with her husband Domingos and their children to Faulara in Leotala (Liquiça). After two weeks, her husband contracted malaria. Physically exhausted and weak, with insufficient food and no access to medicine, Domingos died on 29 February 1999. Soon after, Augusta gave birth to her child. The baby died at the age of two weeks and four days. \textsuperscript{325}

364. A similar story was related by Miguel dos Santos. When, on 15 February 1999, BMP militia began attacking the villages of Vatuvou and Cuico (Maubara, Liquiça), a large number of people sought safety in the mountains and other places. Miguel ran away with his wife and their new-born baby to escape the violence. They hid in the Bikolo area near the Kaisavo River for 30 days. Living in very poor conditions, the five-week-old baby died. After burying their child, Miguel and his wife fled to Sare, Asulau (Hatulia, Ermera), which borders the sub-district of Maubara.
Thousands of displaced people were already gathered there, and the family stayed there until the arrival of Interfet in late September 1999. 

365. Marcelino Utasulu told the Commission how he and his wife, Magdalena Marcal, fled to Asulau when his wife was three months pregnant. Magdalena died during childbirth on 3 June 1999. The new-born baby could not survive without his mother; and died six days after his birth. 

366. Security continued to deteriorate in the district of Liquiça, culminating in the massacre on 6 April 1999 of those seeking refuge at the Liquiça Church (see below). The Commission received accounts of acts of violence by BMP militia against suspected pro-independence supporters in the district, forcing thousands to flee to the mountains and to cross the border into West Timor, even before April 1999. 

Viqueque

367. Two other districts which reported violence and displacement before April 1999 were Viqueque and Covalima. In this period the number of reported cases of violence leading to displacements occurring in Viqueque was exceeded only by the number reported from Liquiça. The earliest incident was reported by Domingos Gomes. It occurred on 4 January 1999 when soldiers from Kodim Viqueque and the Team Makikut militia began firing into the air. The shooting continued for some hours, scaring people in the immediate vicinity to run into the forest. The shooting did not stop until the village-level military officer and the local parish priest, Father Francisco, intervened. 

368. The Commission also heard evidence about coordinated attacks by the Team Makikut and Naga Merah militias in a number of locations in Dilor (Lacluta, Viqueque) on 20 March 1999:

On 20 March, after gathering at the TNI post in Dilor, in Lacluta Sub-district, newly-recruited militias attacked people in surrounding villages; beat and threatened alleged supporters of independence. Roughly 160 people were briefly detained at the Koramil in Dilor by TNI and [the Team] Makikut militia and an estimated 500 people from the area fled their homes in fear. 

369. The Commission received a report that 11 militia members assaulted an East Timorese man during March 1999, causing him to flee to the forests of Wefia Aitana. He returned home but was assaulted again on 17 and 19 April 1999 and fled to Kakae Uma. The Commission also received a report that seven men fled to the mountains in Luca. They were eventually captured by a Babinsa and detained in the Koramil in Viqueque. They were released on 15 April and again ran to the forest. 

370. An East Timorese woman from the village of Dilor (Lacluta, Viqueque) described an attack on her house by Team Makikut militia on 20 March 1999. Failing to capture her son who had earlier fled to safety, the militia moved on to the house of another person thought to be a pro-independence supporter. However this person also escaped. The militia looted the family’s possessions. 

371. The Commission also received a report that an East Timorese woman and her family fled their home in the village of Dilor (Lacluta, Viqueque) to Laline, after hearing that there would be an attack by Naga Merah militia. She was found by members of the Koramil who threatened her with weapons as they tried to extract information about the whereabouts of a family member who was active in the clandestine movement.
372. The Commission received reports about the detention of three civil servants in Lacluta by Team Makikit, led by an East Timorese F4. After vowing to “eradicate civil servants known to be two-faced”, F4 and about ten militia members sought the three men in their homes in Rade Uma, Dilor. They took one to the Koralmil headquarters in Lacluta, but allowed the other two to come unaccompanied the following morning. One of the men, who was wounded by an arrow that night by a Makikit militiaman (F38), ran to the mountains with two of his friends. After asking for protection from the local priest and being detained for a short while, they fled to Dili.

Covalima

373. In Covalima the Avé Maria Church in Suai was already being occupied as a place of refuge as early as February 1999. The Mahidi militia, based in Cassa (Ainaro) had killed at least five civilians in Galitas (Quimaki, Zumalai, Covalima) on 25 January 1999. While the Mahidi militia continued to operate in the sub-districts of Zumalai and Suai, the Laksaur militia, formed in early January 1999, began terrorising the population in Suai, Tilomar and other sub-districts of Covalima.

374. Maria Amaral told the Commission that in February 1999 F5, the East Timorese Sakunar militia leader, and his men threatened the residents of the housing complex in the village of Salele (Tilomar) who were thought to be pro-independence. She said that about 200 people sought refuge in the Suai Church. They stayed there until the ballot, and were joined later by thousands of others before the attack on the church on 6 September 1999. By March the militia members had begun to focus their attention on the displaced people in the church, seeing them as supporters of independence. An East Timorese man told the Commission that when he was captured by Laksaur militia on 13 March 1999, he was told that he would be killed if he took refuge in the Avé Maria Church. By March 1999, the climate of terror created by militia violence in the area meant that the mere accusation by police and TNI that villagers were supporters of independence was enough to cause them to flee in fear to the mountains or to the Avé Maria Church in Suai. In the coming months, the church was to become an epicentre of militia and TNI intimidation and violence against the population who had fled their homes.

375. By the end of March, the problem of internal displacement was serious enough to warrant Dili-based NGOs to decide to develop a mechanism to distribute humanitarian aid. In an activity report for the period of March to May 1999, the local NGOs listed a total of 12,073 internally displaced persons known to them at the time. They comprised 2,670 displaced to Dili from various districts and 9,403 displaced in other districts. The report gave a breakdown showing large concentrations of displaced people in specific locations: 2,753 people in Gariana (Vatuou, Maubara, Liquiça) displaced from the town of Maubara and Vatuou Village; 375 people living with the Carmelite nuns in Lisadila (Maubara, Liquiça); 3,033 people in Sare (Hatulia, Ermera), most from the neighbouring Maubara Sub-district; 2,753 at the church in Suai, most from Tilomar; and 489 in the town of Viqueque from neighbouring villages.

First mass displacements, April 1999

Graph showing April bump for displacements

376. In March 1999 Indonesian and Portuguese ministerial-level negotiations in New York, facilitated by the United Nations, worked towards an agreement on the modalities to offer the

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1 The Emergency Secretariat (Posko) for Internally Displaced People was established on 27 March, 1999 by East Timorese NGOs, church organisations, volunteers and representatives from displaced communities after a disaster preparedness workshop held by Yayasan HAK in cooperation with Oxfam Australia. Its aim was to coordinate humanitarian aid by local NGOs as well as collect and disseminate information on internally displaced people (IDP’s). Members included Yayasan HAK, Etadep, Caritas, Timor Aid, Yayasan Kasimo, Biahula, and Volunteers for Humanity (Jakarta).
East Timorese people a choice to accept or reject the Indonesian Government’s offer of “wide-ranging autonomy”. In the month of April, during the period leading up to the 5 May Agreements, there was an upsurge of violence that caused thousands of people to be displaced.

377. Although there had been sporadic violence in the early months of 1999, inauguration ceremonies for militia from early April sparked organised waves of violence, especially in the western districts. The Commission received more than 120 statements from the districts of Liquiça, Dili, Bobonaro, Ermera, Manufahi and Oecusse, describing incidents of violence leading to displacement in the month of April. Major human rights violations took place in Liquiça, Cailaco (Bobonaro), and Dili (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances).

Liquiça

378. In the district of Liquiça the BMP militia began a campaign of violence on 5 April, when BMP militia from Maubara attacked the town of Liquiça. The attack left at least seven dead or disappeared and 150 houses burnt. More than a thousand people sought shelter at the main church and adjoining parish priest’s residence in the town of Liquiça.

379. BMP militia surrounded the church grounds the next day. After hours of tense negotiations during which police officers demanded that the parish priest surrender a CNRT leader, BMP militia with support from the Indonesian police and military attacked the church compound. Between 60 and 100 people were killed or disappeared during this attack (see Chapter 7.2 Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances for detailed account of the Liquiça Church Massacre).

380. The killing spree continued and spread to other areas in the district. Thousands of people fled to the mountains, including to Sare in the village of Asulau (Hatulia, Ermera), which was considered to be under Falintil control. Some were forcibly displaced by the BMP and Indonesian military to Maubara and West Timor.

381. The violence in the month of April in the district of Liquiça did not end with the massacre at the church. Villagers were forced from their homes in Luculai, Loidahar and Darulete in Liquiça Sub-district to the town of Liquiça, where they were subjected to intimidation and abuse and pressured to support autonomy. Men were forced to join the militia groups or flee. People were also forced to fly the Indonesian flag, to build militia “guard posts”, and participate in “night watch” patrols to search for and capture independence activists. Girls and young women were forced to attend parties where they had to dance for the militia. In this context of violence and intimidation people continued to flee Liquiça for their safety. Approximately 150 people fled to Dili, seeking refuge at the house of Manuel Carrascalão, a public figure from Liquiça. Two weeks later they became victims of further militia violence, when militia groups attacked Manuel Carrascalão’s house in Dili (see Dili, below).

Bobonaro

382. On 8 April 1999 a large rally was held in Maliana, the capital of Bobonaro District, to announce the district inauguration of the United Front for Unity, Democracy and Justice (FPDK Forum Persatuan Demokrasi dan Keadilan, a recently formed pro-autonomy political group with close links to the civil administration and the military) of the militia groups in East Timor. In attendance, among others, were the district military commander (Kodim commander), Lietenant Colonel Burhanuddin Siagian, his intelligence chief, Sutrisno, João Tavares and the district administrator, Guilherme dos Santos. District civil servants were required to attend the rally, during which Lieutenant Colonel Siagian and João Tavares publicly threatened to kill independence supporters. After the ceremony, an order went out that all householders were required to raise the Indonesian flag or risk being beaten. More than ten pro-independence leaders were killed and mutilated in the weeks immediately following (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful
383. On 12 April 1999 the TNI-escorted vehicle of a pro-autonomy leader, Manuel Gama Soares, was ambushed in Poegoa (Cailaco, Bobonaro). Gama and a TNI soldier were shot dead by unknown perpetrators. In retaliation on the same day TNI soldiers and Halilintar rounded-up men, women and children from surrounding villages and brought them to the Koramil in Marco. In two separate incidents, seven men were executed while in TNI custody (see Chapter 7.2 Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances). The bodies were kept on public display for the rest of the day, apparently intended as a warning to terrorise the population. That night they were removed and were never recovered.

384. Indictments filed by the Prosecutor General at the Special Panel for Serious Crimes in the Dili District Court allege more events followed the Cailaco incident. Between 12 and 13 April 1999, in the sub-district of Cailaco and the town of Maliana, the houses of pro-independence supporters were burned and their property stolen. On 13 April 1999, the villagers of Daudo were rounded up and forced by TNI members to move to the village of Biadila. The men were also forced to join the Cailaco-based Guntur militia. On 14 April 1999, at the funeral of Manuel Gama, João Tavares made a speech promising to kill all Falintil members and their supporters. The TNI district commander, Lieutenant Colonel Burhanuddin Siagian, also told mourners that if there were any pro-independence supporters among them, they would suffer the same fate as those who had been killed. In the following days TNI and militia members went to various villages in Cailaco believed to be supportive of independence. Under threat of death, villagers were forced to move into camps in Samutaben and Raiheu.

385. On 15 April the approximately 700 to 800 people of Goulolo were forced to move to Turema. Once resettled, the men were forced to join the newly formed Guntur militia. On 16 April the population of Raiheu in the sub-district of Cailaco (approximately 800 to 1000 people) were forced to move to the village of Ritabou in Maliana Sub-district.

386. Members of the TNI and the Guntur and Halilintar militias gathered for a roll-call at the Koramil in Marco on the morning of 18 April. In the presence of TNI officers, the East Timorese Halilintar militia commander, F6, told militia members they were going to go to the villages in the surrounding mountains and destroy the homes of independence supporters. Militia members were also told to shoot at anyone making trouble or running away. The members of Guntur and Halilintar militia split into groups and went to Bisale, Samutaben, Asalau, Adusleten and Kalicoe and looted, burned and destroyed the houses of independence supporters.

387. Between 14 and 19 April, members of the TNI and numerous militia groups from the district of Bobonaro went to Manapa in Cailaco Sub-district and forced the population to walk to the aldeia of Samutaben. Many of the men who were independence supporters had already fled from Manapa. On or about 19 April, members of the DMP (Dadurus Merah Putih) militia went to Manapa and began burning the village and destroying houses.

388. The violence continued and spread to other areas, including the sub-district of Atabae. The Commission received numerous testimonies describing the forced displacement by the Halilintar and Armui militias under the command of F6 of people from villages in Atabae Sub-district to other villages in the sub-district, such as Koliima and Atabae, and to West Timor. Others fled to the mountains to escape the violence.

389. CovalimaBy April 1999 the Laksaur militia had begun to attack pro-independence supporters in the town of Suai and the surrounding sub-districts. The Commission received at least 17 testimonies of violent incidents causing displacement in Covalima in April 1999.

390. Rosantina de Araújo told the Commission of an attack on 9 April 1999 by Laksaur militia. Armed with modern weapons, from their post in Leogore they attacked Nainare (Suai Town). The
civilian population fled to the forest as the militia burned and destroyed their properties. A similar incident took place on the same day in Holpilat (also in Suai Town), resulting in hundreds of civilians fleeing to the forest.

391. The attacks continued throughout the month of April, causing hundreds of people to flee their homes. On 12 April 1999 Laksaur militia broke down the door of Madalena Moniz’s house in Asumaten (Debos, Suai Town). They were looking for her husband, who had already fled. On the same day, in Camanasa (Suai Town), Francisco Cardoso, a treasurer in the local Education Department, was assaulted by an East Timorese Laksaur commander F7. Mr Cardoso was also threatened with death if he did not withhold the salaries of teachers who supported independence. Francisco Cardoso’s wife, Felismina de Jesus and her sister Angela Maia, fled to Lospalos (Lautém) after being told that if they became “mistresses” to militia leaders Francisco Cardoso’s safety would be guaranteed.

392. Ermelinda Moniz told the Commission of the brutal killing of at least three suspected independence supporters in Nikir Raihun (Foholulik, Tilomar, Covalima) on 23 April 1999. One of the victims was beheaded (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances). Led by East Timorese militia leader F5, the militia then burned the surrounding houses causing the population to flee into the forest. Three civilians were shot from behind as they attempted to run away.

393. Julião Gusmão was detained by Laksaur militia in Leogore (Suai Town) on 24 April. He was beaten and interrogated about the activities of his relatives. When he was released, he did not return home but sought refuge in another village, Ogués (Maucatar). He later moved to the Suai Church.

394. Paulus Vicente told the Commission that, on 24 April, he was abducted by Laksaur militia from his home in Belulic Leten (Fatumean). He was taken to the local Laksaur post where he was beaten by at least six militia members known to him. After being detained there for one week, Paulus fled to the town of Suai.

395. On 26 April Francisco Espirito Santo and Vicente Alves were attacked and abducted in Debos (Suai Town)) by ten Laksaur militia. They were detained at the Laksaur post in Leogore for about one week. Finally they were released after they signed a letter pledging their support for pro-autonomy. They sought refuge in the forest because they felt unsafe.

396. The Commission received evidence that women became vulnerable to sexual violence during their displacement (see Chapter 7.8: Sexual Violence). At least three cases of sexual violence against women from Covalima are known to have occurred in April 1999. WL reported her rape by a member of Laksaur militia when she fled her home and sought protection with relatives who were members of Laksaur. On 25 April 1999 YL’s house was taken over by Laksaur militia, led by F5, for use as militia post. Her husband fled to the forest. YL became a victim of sexual slavery. ZL fled to Labarai in Betun, Atambua (West Timor, Indonesia) together with five other members of her family. When they arrived there F8, an East Timorese member of the Mahidi militia, asked them for their identity cards. Failing to produce these cards, they were forced to give a “donation” of cash. F8 then forced ZL to accompany him to an isolated rice field, while verbally abusing her with lewd remarks. He led her to an abandoned hut but ZL was able to escape.

Dili

397. On 17 April 1999 an Apel Akbar (Great Rally) of Aitarak militia and pro-autonomy supporters took place in front of the Governor’s Office in Dili. In front of Indonesian officials Eurico Guterres, formerly head of Gardapaksi (Garda Muda Penegak Integrasi, Youth Guards for
Integration), publicly announced his intention to kill pro-independence supporters. A secret TNI report quotes his words:

Aitarak forces are going to carry out a cleansing operation (operasi sisir) against civil servants who have used official facilities while being traitors to the integration struggle. Aitarak forces are going to crush anyone—be they government officials, community leaders or businessmen—who has assisted the anti-integration camp. Aitarak forces will not hesitate to wipe out Mário Viegas Carrascalão and his circle, who have been traitors.367

398. At the end of the rally Aitarak militia went on a rampage across Dili. Targeting those suspected of having ties to the pro-independence movement, they destroyed five vehicles and seven buildings, including the offices of the local newspaper Suara Timor Timur (Voice of East Timor).368 Julio da Costa Xavier described how members of Aitarak militia attacked him in his house at Metiaut, Bidau Santana (East Dili, Dili) after attending the rally. He managed to escape to the relative safety of Laga (Baucau).369

399. The Aitarak militia massed in front of the house of Manuel Carrascalão, where his family and villagers who had fled the violence in Liquiça sought refuge, and killed at least 12 people (see 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances).

400. The day of this militia campaign, 17 April 1999, marked the beginning of large-scale displacement within Dili. Many people began to seek shelter in church buildings hoping that they would be protected by their sanctity. Others sought shelter with family members or in uninhabited areas. Local NGOs providing humanitarian aid to displaced people in Dili documented at least 44 locations in East and West Dili where more than 2,000 people sought safety away from their homes.370

Oecusse

401. Following the PPI inauguration at the rally in Dili on 17 April 1999, members of the Sakunar Militia returned to the district of Oecusse armed with automatic weapons. They began attacking CNRT leaders and terrorising the population. At the same time the militia began to recruit young men. Village heads who refused to produce recruits, and the young men who refused to join, were threatened that their families would be killed and their homes burned.

402. The Commission received at least ten statements recounting incidents of violence that led to displacement.371 Julio Tout reported how he and three other men – Antonio Beto, José Sufa and José Poto – were captured by the Sakunar militia and brought to the aldeia of Bebo Lela Ufe, (Nitibe, Oecusse) Julio managed to escape to the village of Anfoang (Central South Timor district, West Timor, Indonesia.)372 The remaining men, joined by Domingos Ele, were detained in an elementary school where they were severely beaten for two days. Antonio Beto died while in detention. Sakunar militia then burned the homes of the detainees and other houses.373 Antonio de Jesus told the Commission how the Sakunar militia came looking for him on 25 April 1999. He ran off to the forest, leaving his family at home. However because they were also threatened, his wife and children followed him into forest soon after.374 In another incident three East Timorese men were detained by Indonesian soldiers from Kodim 1639 in Oecusse. They were brought to F9, the East Timorese village head of Lela Ufe (Nitibe), and were beaten by members of Sakunar militia. Badly wounded, they managed to escape to the forest.375 Bentu Bobo told the Commission that he and seven other men were forced to join the militia in Hoinino Bobometo, (Oesilo, Oecusse) by the East Timorese Oesilo Sakunar commander, F10. In order to avoid this forced recruitment, they fled to the forest.376
By the end of April the situation in Oecusse was very tense and many fled to the forest or to West Timor. During the Sakunar inauguration on 1 May CNRT leaders were rounded up at gunpoint and forced to drink their own blood and to publicly declare that CNRT was dissolved and to pledge their support for autonomy. Uniformed members of TNI members publicly beat several of the CNRT leaders at this rally.  

Ermera

According to witness testimonies the month of April marked the beginning of a wave of violence in the district of Ermera. An East Timorese commander of the Darah Merah militia told the Commission that in April the district military commander (Kodim commander) of Ermera gave at least seven pieces of modern weaponry and two military vehicles to the militia group. Two hundred members of Darah Merah militia launched an attack against CNRT supporters in the sub-district of Hatulia. The CNRT members fought back and one militia member and two CNRT members were killed in the mêlée.

The Commission received numerous statements describing cases of violence in April 1999 in Ermera, Gleno and Atsabe, causing the population to flee their homes.

Erminia Soares do Ceu from Potete (Ermera) witnessed a military operation conducted on 10 April 1999, conducted by Indonesian soldiers from the Kodim in Gleno and Darah Merah militia in which dozens of houses in Ermera were burned. These included the house of Alexandre dos Santos and his wife Regina de Araújo, both supporters of independence, who fled to the forest. Some who fled, like Saturnino Borromeo, sought protection with Falintil forces.
Conditions of the internally displaced in Sare (Ermera) and Faulara (Liquiça)

From 2 to 4 July 1999 a group of NGOs, accompanied by UNAMET and UNHCR officials, distributed 25 tons of food and other humanitarian aid to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sare. The following are excerpts from a report of the visit:

“In Sare, we discovered that there were 3,800 IDPs from seven villages: Vatuboro, Cuico, Lisadila, Vatuvou, Maubarakisa, Vavekna, Guguleur (all in Maubara, Liquiça). On our drive to Sare we saw the villages of Cuico and Lisadila were completely burned to the ground, without a single house left. After a day in Sare we discovered a second location, Faulara, which had 3,500 IDPs according to the refugees themselves.

“We were told by the village head of Asulau [Sare is an aldeia within Asulau] that the displaced began to come in February, [when] the militia attacks began. Before the violence Asulau had a population of 1,449, and now it has more than 5,000 people. Earlier in February-March there were around 5,000 IDPs in Asulau. Some have moved on to Atabae (Bobonaro) and Hatulia (Ermera), leaving more than 3,000 here now. According to the village head of Asulau, most of the houses in the seven villages have been burned except the houses of those who have agreed to join the militia. According to him, the militia are trying to drive the people to Maubara Town where they will be under the control of the militia to ensure that they vote for autonomy. Families have been separated, some fleeing to safer areas, others having to comply with the militia’s plan to relocate masses of people to Maubara.

“Since February at least five [people] have been killed by Besi Merah Putih and Halilintar, the two militia groups operating here. These people – Sabilu (21 years), Silvanu (35 years), Maubisa (50 years), Eduardo (18 years) and Amelia (60 years) – were killed when they attempted to return to their homes to pick cassava and find food for their families. The last shooting occurred on 16 June. During our time there we were also presented with a list of 23 women from one village who were raped by militia. According to the community leaders, women are called to the militia post where they are harassed and raped. They also testified to the fact that the attacks of the militia are supported by BTT Bataylon Tempur Teritorial, (Territorial combat battalion, the battalion assigned to the area), Koramil Maubara and Brimob. The Sub-district administrator (camat) and Sub-district military commander (Koramil commander) are leading the activities of the militia.

“In February the local community shared their food with the displaced people but by March their food supply could no longer support such an influx…Since March the IDPs have had to find their own food in the forests and by scavenging what they can from their gardens. But this is a riskyendeavour as they must enter into BMP-controlled areas. The BMP not only burned their houses and granaries, but also looted anything that could be sold, such as zinc roofing and livestock. They also burned and destroyed the fields. [The IDPs say]: 'When is safe we want to return to our homes, but where will we stay?' referring to the fact that all their resources have been destroyed. 'It is like we are back in 1975,' said one old man. Another refugee told us that this is now the time to begin preparing their fields for the next planting season. This may mean that they cannot plant in time for the rains in October.

“Some of the internal refugees from Cuico (Maubara, Liquiça) said that all 400 families have lost their homes there. The IDPs from Cuico make up at least 2,250 of the refugees in Sare now. In Cuico, as in the other villages, they plant corn, beans, cassava, and coffee. When they fled their village they had not harvested their crops. This month is the beginning of the coffee harvest, however it seems that the militia are the ones who are picking coffee.
"According to the Asulau village head, at least 3 to 4 die everyday. There is a health centre in Asulau, however the nurse fled to Hatulia in March 1998 and prior to that there were no medical supplies. Many of the refugees have malaria, respiratory infections, diarrhoea, and dysentery. There are sources of clean water but not enough. Households who get to these sources earliest are the ones who have enough for their daily needs. Now, they are eating cassava and 'all that goats can eat, we can eat'.

"Faulara is a transmigration site in the village of Leolata (Liquiça) which was opened in 1996. According to a community leader of this area, there are 1,600 original inhabitants. Now there are 5,100 people, which means an IDP population of 3,500. The IDPs have been arriving since January and February, approximately 70 people have died from disease since January. Because many were sick, the community decided to separate them into smaller groups. For example out of the 3,500, there are now 500 IDPs in Bantur which is about 8 kms from Faulara. They plan, however, to move these IDPs back to Faulara.

"The IDPs and local community in Faulara are living in fear of the militia. A man from the village of Asuman (Liquiça) told the story of how his house was burned by militia and military. On 17 May, militia encircled his house, assisted by military personnel. They closed the door to the kitchen in which his wife and three other women were trapped, and burned the kitchen. His wife and the three women eventually were able to escape, but three others died during this attack.

"In Faulara we also interviewed a woman who had just escaped captivity by BMP militia in the town of Maubara. In February 1999 she ran from her home in Maubaralisa due to attacks by militia to Gariana. She and her family were there until March when she moved to Asulau. After the Indonesian elections (June 1999) they moved to Faulara. She was captured on 17 June when she returned to her home in Maubaralisa to pray at her parents' grave and harvest cassava for her family. She was accompanied by her seven-year-old daughter. When the militia took her she resisted but then they took her daughter so she had to follow. She was held in captivity for two weeks. She said that she was put in the house of a militia family, was not mistreated but was not allowed to leave. When the militia told her that she and others would be brought to Atambua (West Timor) in order to register [to vote], she ran away. Asked how many others were captive like her, she said thousands. She and her daughter walked for two days through the forest. She arrived the morning that we were there. Her daughter looked very weak and tired."

407. The Commission notes that in April 1999 violent incidents occurred in all 13 districts. However, the gravest human rights violations took place in the six districts mentioned above. These events, and others not described here caused large-scale displacement throughout Timor-Leste.

The quiet before the storm (May to August 1999)

408. With the arrival of UNAMET personnel and large numbers of international observers in June 1999, physical attacks on independence supporters declined somewhat.

Insert graph 1999 (p.4 displacement memo)

409. The period leading to the planned August ballot was relatively quiet. In some areas however, serious incidents of human rights violations leading to further displacements continued to take place. Examples of such violations include: the detention, rape and torture of suspected independence supporters by militia in Lolotee (Bobonaro) in June 1999, the killing of two university students in Hera (Dili) in May and; the attack on the UNAMET office in Maliana (Bobonaro). The establishment of militia roadblocks, forced relocation and the burning and looting of homes continued unabated and with complete impunity. As the day of the Popular Consultation neared, there was a dramatic increase in intimidation by the militia groups as well as the TNI, the police and the civil administration. These terror tactics were directed not only against those who
were perceived to be pro-independence but also against UNAMET local staff, and anyone assisting internally displaced people.

**Food security and humanitarian aid to the internally displaced**

410. The violence and security situation exacerbated existing food shortages created by climatic extremes. Harvests were already depressed in 1998 by an El Niño drought and in 1999 by excessive La Niña rains. In addition the poor security situation in February-March made it difficult for people to sow and tend their fields, further endangering food supplies. Flight and forced relocation separated some from their farms completely, while those still at home found their food security imperilled by severe restrictions on mobility during the June corn harvest and militia looting and destruction of crops and livestock. In addition travel restrictions also prevented the movement of food commodities to markets.\(^{385}\) Intimidation of humanitarian workers made assistance virtually unavailable to most of the population, making the internally displaced people even more vulnerable to hunger and disease.

\(^{385}\) Travel permits (surat jalan) signed by the local militia leaders, the sub-district chief and the local military commander, were a requirement for anyone wishing to travel beyond their village. [UNAMET, Political Overview, Alambua-Covalima-Ainaro, 15-17 June 1999]
**Attack on the humanitarian convoy in Liquiça**

On 4 July 1999 a humanitarian convoy organised by local NGOs and accompanied by officials from UNAMET and UNHCR was attacked by BMP militia in Liquiça as it returned from delivering aid to IDPs. Several local NGO workers were seriously injured, a UNAMET staff member was directly threatened at gunpoint and vehicles were smashed with pipes and rocks. Militia pursued the convoy, clinging to the outside of one of the vehicles while threatening the NGO passengers with homemade guns and machetes. A joint statement issued on the day after the attack on the NGOs described attempts to obtain police escorts, including through meetings with officials at the police headquarters (Polda), and the governor days before the food delivery, as well as attempts by UNAMET to organise a police escort for the return journey. In this joint statement the NGOs described the attack:

“A blue minibus [came] from the direction of the Koramil filled with armed militia. The militia were waving their weapons and screaming ‘Kill, kill’ at members of the humanitarian mission. Indonesian police and intelligence members at the location watched this happening, without reacting. Members of the humanitarian mission were pursued by militia with guns, knives, and machetes. UNAMET personnel attempted to intervene, to protect the NGO workers from the attacks of the militia. Gunshots were fired.

“Members of the humanitarian mission scrambled into some of our vehicles, and the UNAMET vehicle. We were pursued by the militia, who also hung onto the UNAMET car, smashed the windows. At one point a traditional gun was pointed into the car. One of our members saw a traditional gun dropped into the car in the fracas. Sixty-two out of our contingent of 77 escaped to the Polres [police station] in Liquiça. At the Polres, humanitarian mission members were treated roughly by some members of the police as if we were the accused. A traditional (hand-made) gun was found in the floor of the UNAMET car. This gun was given to the Liquiça police for evidence. UNAMET personnel being evacuated from Liquiça joined us at the Polres. After a while the ten members were brought from the Kapolsek. Those who were held at the Polsek were intimidated and interrogated. After negotiations between UNAMET police and local police, we were allowed to leave with the UNAMET convoy to the Dili Polda where we would be questioned. We were missing five NGO workers and one refugee. We arrived late at night in Dili. After negotiations between Polda and UNAMET, the humanitarian mission was allowed to leave Polda together with UNAMET personnel.”

The police took no action to arrest the armed militia members who remained outside of the police compound continuing to shout threats at the victims. On the contrary, a week after the attack, the police launched an aggressive investigation to bring a spurious weapons charge against the UN humanitarian officer, whom they alleged had been carrying arms.

Ian Martin, UN SRSG (Special Representative of the Secretary-General) for the East Timor Popular Consultation and head of the UN Mission in East Timor from May to November 1999, assessed the impact of the convoy attack this way:

“The militia attack on the Liquiça convoy had set back efforts to deliver assistance, although the ensuing publicity had compelled the Indonesian authorities to recognise the humanitarian issue and Habibie had ordered efforts to address it. Not only were [internally displaced persons] seen as undesirable pro-independence elements [the very reason they were targeted in the first place], but so were the East Timorese NGOs who wished to assist them. The Indonesians saw themselves in competition to deliver relief through government channels...Obstacles imposed by authorities meant that it was not until 2 August that another convoy reached one of the major areas of displacement—one month after the Liquiça incident.”
The attack received widespread attention and forced Indonesian authorities to admit the role of intimidation in preventing humanitarian access. Despite President Habibie’s demand that the attacks stop, the attacks on internally displaced persons continued unabated, apparently in an attempt to keep them from polling places. On 16 July the BMP attacked them in Faulara, and on 18 July in Liquiça, causing many to flee back into the mountains.389

411. The exact numbers of the internally displaced persons are difficult to estimate. The combination of frequent movement and the fact that most were not in formal camps (most sheltered either in the homes of friends or relatives or in remote areas) makes the calculation of numbers problematic. The biggest problem, however, was the lack of access to the displaced by humanitarian relief agencies because of poor security. UNAMET compiled data from humanitarian sources at the time and estimated that by mid-July there were some 40,000-60,000 people displaced, 80% of whom were from the border areas of Bobonaro, Covalima, and Liquiça.390 In Ermera 4,000 people were being held by militia in the sub-district of Cailaco in mid-July.391

The displaced return to register

412. In late July the displaced began to return home. The return, however, was reportedly driven by the desire to vote and to be with their communities at this crucial time rather than improved security. There are reports that the CNRT also instructed people to return. In late July UNAMET reported that some 9,000 people who had been displaced in Liquiça were returning to villages in the district or registering in Dili. Of the 5,000 people who fled from the district of Bobonaro, 3,500 had registered in Dili.392 As a result many returned to the renewed danger of militia attacks and to locations without humanitarian access.393

413. The increased danger faced by displaced persons when they emerged from their hiding places is illustrated by the plight of those who returned to Suai. In late July those who had fled to the surrounding mountains and villages came back to Suai where they sought refuge in the Avê Maria Church. The church was surrounded by increasingly threatening militia. There was no police or Brimob security presence. The number of people seeking shelter in the church rose from 700 on 12 July to 1,700 by 9 August and then to 2,500 by 19 August.394 Following a large pro-independence rally and a visit from the UN SRSG (Special Representative of the Secretary General) and the chairman of the Indonesian Task Force for the Implementation of the Popular Consultation in East Timor (Satuan Tugas Pelaksanaan Penentuan Pendapat Timor Timur SatGas P3TT) on 19 August, the district administrator informed a priest that the internally displaced were a political group and must disperse. The district administrator cut the water supply to the church in an effort to force the displaced people out of the compound. Water was restored on 22 August after protests from UNAMET and a visiting US Congress delegation.395

414. In the days leading up to the Popular Consultation roadblocks, armed patrols and open threats of violence if people did not vote “the right way” continued. In Bobonaro on 10 August, a meeting of the district administrator, the Kodim commander, the FPDK, the BRTT and several village heads openly threatened attacks on villagers if autonomy was not successful.396 CNRT activity in Covalima prompted militia armed attacks on rallies, CNRT offices, and people displaying support for CNRT. In both Covalima and Ainaro, Mahidi and Laksaur militiamen, many of them armed, patrolled and intimidated with impunity, threatening to kill those on a list of pro-independence supporters reportedly provided by a TNI soldier.397

415. In Oecusse on 27 August 1999 community leaders in pro-independence strongholds had late-night visits from members of the Sakunar militia who threatened to burn their homes and harm their families. Militia prevented people attending CNRT events, while 300 BMP members “on a camping holiday” drove around with Sakunar firing guns into the air. Both militia groups stoned the CNRT office all night and into the next day. CNRT members asked for police protection. Police arrived and lined up behind the militia and began firing at the CNRT office for
several hours, killing six. Many houses in Santa Rosa near the CNRT building were burned and the CNRT building was totally destroyed. When the CNRT held a campaign event in Padiae (Pante Makassar) uniformed police attacked them. CNRT leaders, high-profile student leaders, UNAMET local staff, local election observers and ordinary community members, especially those from around Santa Rosa, fled to the mountains. Some 667 people sheltered together in Cutete in the hills outside Pante Makassar. Some took refuge in the church and police station, others were taken forcibly by police to the station. 398

416. In Viqueque on 21 August severe intimidation and gunfire in Uma Tolu (Lacluta, Viqueque) was reported by the international observer group, the International Federation in East Timor (IFET), in the final days before the Popular Consultation. On 22 August Babinsa and soldiers from Battalion 406 surrounded a group of internally displaced people at the village meeting house near the football field in Uma Tolu. One villager was shot in the leg and nine others were wounded as well. Several houses were burned and belongings destroyed, including voter registration cards. One of the homes destroyed included that of the school headmaster, who had organised youths into an anti-militia guard. Some 260 people fled as a result of these events. 399

417. Elsewhere in the district police did not intervene to stop militia attacks on a pro-independence student office and on CNRT offices in Viqueque Town. TNI and militia members came to a voter education seminar to photograph those in attendance and threatened to kill those who did not vote for autonomy. Militia knocked on people’s doors, shouted obscenities and threw stones. There were militia checkpoints at key locations, especially in Uma Tolu.

418. In the village of Beloi, (Viqueque, Viqueque) a neighbourhood watch group put up a roadblock. Militia responded by descending on the village, firing weapons. Phone calls to the police for help produced no result. The militia continued the attack throughout the day, killing three. Many fled into hiding: 200-300 of 600 eligible voters fled the village of Lamac Laran, Caraubalo (Viqueque, Viqueque) only four elderly people were left in Tahular, Caraubalo (Viqueque, Viqueque). 30 men fled from Buanarak, Uabubo (Ossu, Viqueque) 25-30 people were left Mamulac, Caraubalo (Viqueque, Viqueque) Residents fled to Ossu, Raitahu and the nearby transmigration area. The displaced in Ossu came from Bubur Larau (273), Buanurak (nine), Loi Huno (65) and Lia Ruca (102). 400

419. The campaign period saw the threat of violence increase in many places. In the district of Bobonaro the Indonesian authorities did all they could to prevent the CNRT campaigning. The CNRT office was sacked by militia one day after its opening. 401 The CNRT had to stop open campaigning after one day when students were attacked by militia with machetes. Meanwhile, the pro-autonomy campaign continued aggressively. On 17 August people were forced to attend an Indonesian Independence Day rally. People in Moleana and Haliko (Maliana, Bobonaro) were beaten by militia from Ritabou (Maliana, Bobonaro) for not attending. Militia attacked student centres, wounding students, and a church youth centre where IDP families were sheltering in Luguli near Maliana. Militia fired on fleeing people, burnt 15 houses, causing locals to flee to the seminary. 402

420. In the district of Covalima local leaders reported that military and government officials were actively campaigning and issuing threats against people in public meetings. 403 In July and August Laksaur blocked major roads and confiscated personal property and food. 404 In August the traditional house “Seri Bein” was burned and everything inside stolen, including livestock and food. 405 These militia activities led to an increase in the number of people sheltering in the church compound at Suai. In addition a pro-independence activist was kidnapped and murdered. After a clash between militia and pro-independence supporters waiting to leave a campaign rally on 19 August, the CNRT suspended its activities. 406

421. On 26 August, the last day of campaigning allocated to the pro-autonomy camp, the militia engaged in aggressive intimidation, especially in Dili where they had gathered from across
the country. Eurico Guterres, addressing a pro-autonomy rally of 15,000 in Dili stadium, promised that Timor-Leste would become a “sea of fire” if independence won the vote. Violence on that day killed eight; all but one at the hands of militia or security forces. Militia either directly interfered with or prevented people from attending UNAMET voter education activities and CNRT campaign events. Threats against UNAMET local staff increased greatly in mid-August, causing many to cancel their contracts and flee to the forest.

422. On polling day, 30 August, in Boboe Leten (Atsabe, Ermera) militia armed with firearms and stones attacked a polling centre, killing two local UNAMET staff and attempting to kill a third. Although Brimob were present, they did not intervene. A special polling site had to be set up in Asualu/Sare (Hatulia, Ermera) for the internally displaced who were too scared to return home to vote. For those who had returned however, most—especially CNRT leaders, UNAMET staff, and student activists—returned to their hiding places in the mountains and forest after casting their ballots, in anticipation of violence. In Bobonaro many hid supplies and belongings in the mountains and the forest in expectation of the coming upheaval. The village head of Atabae (Bobonaro) reported that a Hallilintar leader told them in July to prepare their belongings because if they did not leave after the ballot they would be killed. Pro-autonomy supporters immediately left for Atambua (West Timor, Indonesia).

Massive displacement and deportation, September 1999

423. Following the announcement of the result of the ballot, widespread violence was unleashed against the East Timorese population. The Commission received 713 statements describing acts of forced displacement and destruction of property in September 1999. The evidence of an organised scorched-earth campaign of property destruction and mass deportation is overwhelming. UNHCR estimated that some 300,000 people fled to the hills and forests near their homes, and 250-280,000 people were deported to West Timor (Indonesia). Amid mass killing (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances) and destruction of 70-80% of buildings, hundreds of thousands of people were rounded up by militia and TNI and herded like cattle from their homes or places of shelter onto trucks and boats bound for West Timor. Some went willingly to West Timor to flee the violence or because they were supporters of the autonomy option. However the evidence also clearly demonstrates that thousands were forced to leave against their will, under threat of death. By 31 December 2002 some 224,570 had returned to Timor-Leste.

Dili

424. The scale of the violence in Dili is explained by its special character as the headquarters of the TNI and one of the fiercest militias in the territory, the site of numerous public buildings and already the most populous town in Timor-Leste before its numbers were swelled by an influx of displaced people in the months leading up to the ballot.

425. Dili predictably became a crucible of post-ballot violence and destruction. Immediately following the ballot thousands of people began to take refuge from militia violence in the compounds of the Dili Diocese, the house of Bishop Belo and the ICRC, and in hundreds of other locations throughout the city. The announcement of the results of the ballot by UNAMET on 4 September 1999, broadcast by radio throughout Timor-Leste, raised the tensions and fears felt by ordinary East Timorese people.

426. By 5 September there were some 300 people in the Câmara Eclesiástica compound of the Diocese of Dili, 5,000 at Bishop Belo’s residence and 2,000 at the ICRC compound. Bishop

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1 The Commission received 414 statements describing forced displacement and 469 statements describing destruction of property, totalling 813 statements. However subtracting the 170 statements which record both forced displacement and destruction of property from this total leaves 713 statements.
Bel and the director of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Dili Diocese, Manuel Abrantes, reportedly went to the regional military headquarters (Korem) and asked TNI to act. They asked the military to take control of the city from the militias in order to protect the people in the Bishop's compound. João Tavares, who was also present at the meeting, said his militia would not surrender until Falintil surrendered and that his militia did not accept the results of the Popular Consultation and were ready to fight.\textsuperscript{414}

427. While this meeting was underway Aitarak militia attacked the compound of the Dili Câmara Eclesiástica, killing at least eight people and injuring scores more. The militiamen were armed with M-16 rifles, pistols, homemade guns and sharp-edged weapons. According to the Serious Crimes Unit indictment, a large number of heavily-armed Indonesian military and police were present but took no action to disperse the militia or stop the attack. A priest inside the compound phoned the police headquarters (Polda) to report they were under attack. He was told that officers were on their way.

428. People were forced outside and were moved to the harbour, being beaten as they went. At least 14 men who were badly beaten were forced into trucks by militia and were never seen again. Once the group from inside the compound arrived at the harbour, militia and police separated the men from the women. The women were taken by the police to their headquarters in Comoro (Dili). The men remained at the harbour where several were attacked by militia and TNI, without intervention from the police. Those known to be independence supporters were singled out for abusive treatment.\textsuperscript{415}

\textit{The attack on the Bishop's compound}

429. The following day, 6 September, Bishop Belo telephoned both the provincial chief of police (Kapolda), Timbul Silaen, and the provincial military commander (Danrem), Colonel Nur Muis to ask for protection and assistance in evacuating the thousands of people in the compound of his residence. Both refused the Bishop's plea. However, an unidentified TNI Lieutenant Colonel came in person to assure the Bishop that the TNI were available to protect the residence. He left after 15 minutes and shortly after militia began to arrive.\textsuperscript{416}

430. An eyewitness reported that some 100 militia arrived by Kijang vehicle, motorbike and dump truck and began shouting threats and circling the compound.\textsuperscript{417} Witnesses report that the militia began firing into the air and then threw Molotov cocktails into the Bishop's house, setting it alight.\textsuperscript{418} Militia then stormed the Bishop's compound and the Canossian Convent behind the Bishop's house where some 100 people were hiding. The militia arrested young men and forced the remainder of the people out of the compound. The indictment states that TNI and mobile brigade police (Brimob) also entered the compound firing their weapons, assaulting the occupants and ordering them outside. Police also assisted in ordering them into the square in front of the Bishop's house, one police officer reportedly dousing the Bishop's house with gasoline and setting it on fire. Militia and TNI searched the house to ensure that there were no displaced people left inside.\textsuperscript{419}

431. Militia freely interrogated the civilian population in the presence of TNI, Brimob and police, searching for independence supporters. Some were ordered to walk to the harbour where they were loaded onto boats for Kupang. Others were taken to the village office at Bidau Santana (Nain Feto/Dili Oriental, Dili) or to the police headquarters to board trucks, minibuses, or Indonesian air force planes for West Timor. They were warned that if they did not comply they would be killed.\textsuperscript{420}

432. The Commission received a number of statements on the attack on the Bishop's house. Herminia Godinho and her family sought protection at the Bishop's residence on 4 September. She told of the attack on the residence by Aitarak militia, including the fatal shooting of a number of civilians:
433. Francisco Tilman reported to the Commission the disappearance of a family member, Vicente da Costa Carlos Tilman. He was among the displaced people at the Bishop’s residence but has never been seen since the attack on 6 September. Fernando da Silva also reported the disappearance of his brother, Mário Correia Fernandes. They sought refuge at the Bishop’s house after the announcement of the ballot results. After the attack they were forcibly moved to Bidau Santana. In the middle of the night, masked men took his brother Mário away. He has not been seen since and is survived by his wife and three children. Armindo Moniz told how his child, Etelvina Martins aged 13, became ill with fear and shock when Aitarak militia began their assault on the Bishop’s residence. He and his family were forcibly deported to the island of Alor (Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia) where his child eventually died from illness.

434. At about the same time as the Bishop’s house was attacked, the ICRC compound was also under siege from Aitarak militia armed with automatic weapons, homemade guns and sharp-edged weapons. At least two persons were killed and the remaining displaced persons were forced to either the port or the police headquarters for deportation.

Evidence from militia members

435. In Metinaro (Dili) in a large-scale operation coordinated by the Sub-district military commander (Koramil commander), the Aitarak militia carried out deportations of thousands of people to West Timor. Orlando de Meio Maia was an Aitarak militia leader in Metinaro who participated in the violence. In his statement to the Commission he described a meeting on 5 September called by the Koramil commander, F13, at which other TNI soldiers were present. During this meeting F13 ordered Orlando and other civil servants to become Aitarak militia, arming them with guns. On the same day, the newly-armed Aitarak members attacked. They burned the house of the local CNRT leader and, the following day, a local leader named Antonio Saldanha was shot by militia in front of the Metinaro military headquarters. Orlando and his family were brought to Atambua by TNI on 10 September 1999.

436. An East Timorese man told the Commission that he was under orders to burn and kill. He understood that unless he did this BMP militia from Liquiça would attack him. He and his friend burned houses, boats and nets in a village in Liquica, and burned a private house in another village. Later they were deported to Atambua.

437. The Commission received a report that Mateus de Carvalho, the village head of Hera (who was also commander of Aitarak militia), fired guns and threatened to deport the civilian population to Kupang (West Timor). The Commission was told that on 6 September an East Timorese woman went to the police station in Metinaro, under instructions from TNI soldiers who shouted at her: “Those who do not want to go will die.” At first the soldiers said that only civil servants and soldiers would go to Kupang for three months. However, after learning about the murder of the principal of the local school (Antoninho), she became very frightened and agreed to go to Kupang.

438. The mass deportation did not mean suffering and death was then confined to refugee camps in West Timor. Madalena da Costa Aleixo told the Commission:

> On 7 September when we were forcibly moved to Kupang I had to leave my invalid mother behind in our traditional house in Metinaro. My mother died while we were in Kupang. She was traumatised by the situation which reminded her of the civil war in 1975.
439. At the same time as hundreds were being herded onto trucks to be brought to the Dili port, some people, led by pro-independence leaders, escaped from the Koramil in Metinaro where they were being held. They fled to the mountains while their homes and villages were burning.431

440. For days groups of heavily armed militia continued to roam freely in Dili, attacking unarmed civilians and driving them from places of refuge to collection locations where they were loaded on to trucks or boats and deported to West Timor. Militia checkpoints were set up throughout the town and along all roads leading out of Dili to ensure people did not leave for anywhere other than West Timor. Dili became a ghost town as most of its inhabitants were either deported to West Timor or fled to the nearby hills.432 Only a handful of people managed to stay in the town, hiding among the smoking rubble.

441. The following table contains further statements from residents of Dili who experienced violence, deportation and displacement in September 1999.

Table 13 - Deportation and displacement, Dili District (Aitarak militia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HRVD</th>
<th>Name and Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03726</td>
<td>Brigida Freitas Correia, Comoro, Dili</td>
<td>On 1 September militia came to my house looking for my husband who was not home. Our house was burned and destroyed. They took me and my child to the Aitarak Post 2. There we were threatened and later moved to the Tropical. A member of Team Makikut from Ossu (Viqueque) intervened and saved us. We were brought to Atambua where we stayed for two months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05705</td>
<td>Domingas da Silva Andrade, Camea, Dili</td>
<td>My family was forced by Aitarak militia from Post 13 to go to Kupang. We were there until April 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05744</td>
<td>Filomeno Matos Guterres, Becora, Dili</td>
<td>After the ballot, militia and TNI began attacking the population. I took my family and ran to Darlau (Aileu). We came back on 22 September 1999 when the situation was better, only to find our house burned to the ground.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bobonaro

442. Even more than other western districts, Bobonaro was a pro-autonomy stronghold and as such was the site of extreme militia activity in September 1999. The backlash against UNAMET local staff began before the Popular Consultation results were announced. On 2 September two local UNAMET staff, Ruben Barros and Domingos Pereira, were killed by Dadurus Merah Putih (DMP) militia and TNI. This led to the evacuation of UNAMET staff the same day. Militia began burning and looting the UNAMET offices and the houses nearby.\(^{432}\) Agapito Soares told the Commission that DMP militia attacked the CNRT’s Maliana office, during which a CNRT supporter named Mateus Breok was shot dead. Agapito along with others fled to Mount Loelaku (Balibo, Bobonaro) seeking protection with Falintil soldiers.\(^{434}\)

443. By the day of the announcement of the results of the ballot thousands of people had already left their homes seeking safety. The TNI and the militias completely controlled the town of Maliana. People remaining in the town were forced to go to the police station, as TNI and militia threatened to kill all independence supporters. Once the police station compound was full members of the DMP militia and TNI forced people from their homes to the hospital or the Maliana sports stadium (GOR) nearby. Eventually the militia brought everyone they could find across the border to the refugee camps in West Timor.

444. Laurentina Amaral and her husband, Florindo da Conceição, for example, were brought to Hakesak (West Timor) by DMP militia on September 8.\(^{435}\) On the same day Jaime dos Santos, Felix Laku and Luis de Jesus hid at the house of a TNI soldier when they were attacked by DMP militia, some clad in all-black “ninja” uniforms. They were forced to go to an area called Turiscai in West Timor.\(^{436}\) Some however escaped the militia. Julião Marques fled his home to hide in the village of Tapo (Bobonaro, Bobonaro) on the day after the ballot. On 7 September DMP militia and soldiers from the Kodim in Maliana attacked her and the community. They ran to the forest in Lepguen (Tapo Memo (Maliana, Bobonaro)).\(^{437}\)

The Maliana Police Station massacre

445. By 8 September, about 1,000 displaced people were in the Maliana Police Station compound. Some had been there several days. At about 6.00pm the TNI and militia, their faces covered with masks or red-and-white bandanas, attacked with knives, machetes and swords. Witnesses recount that pro-independence leaders were separated out and hacked to death. Some sought Brimob protection but were offered none. Some were killed in front of their families, others as they tried to escape. Some had their bodies burned. People scattered: some hid in trees, others crawled up into the ceilings of buildings or hid in wardrobes or rolled-up mattresses.\(^{438}\) There were some 435 police present in the compound at the time of the attack, including the local police, mobile brigade and the eastern contingent (Kontingen Lorosae), which had been brought in to secure the ballot.\(^{439}\) All the police officers, except eight who were suspected of being independence supporters, were armed, yet no shots were fired by them to prevent the attack. Police officers took no steps to protect the internally displaced people and stopped those who attempted to escape the rampage from doing so.\(^{440}\) The attack lasted three hours and afterwards the bodies were loaded on to waiting trucks and transported to Batugade (Balibo, Bobonaro) to be dumped at sea. It is not known how many were killed.

446. That night independence supporters who had survived escaped to hills. The following day DMP militia from Ritabou (Maliana, Bobonaro) tracked a group of 13 survivors to a waterhole in Mulau, Ritabou (Maliana, Bobonaro) All were shot and hacked to death (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances).\(^{441}\) One of the bodies later washed up on the beach and was positively identified. The survivors in the police station and hospital who had not been able to escape to the hills were forced to go to West Timor.\(^{442}\)
447. Following the massacre TNI soldiers and militia began clearing the town. People were either forced to walk to West Timor or had to pay for it if they were transported by truck. The TNI coerced people on to the trucks by threatening to drop bombs on Maliana, to destroy the villages in the mountains or to wage all-out war.  

448. At the same time those who attempted to avoid the violence by fleeing to the forest were pursued by militia, driven back into town and then forcibly deported to camps in West Timor. In these camps they continued to suffer violence and extortion by the militia. The people in the village of Saburai (Maliana, Bobonaro) recalled their capture when they were attempting to flee to the forest. Their houses were burned and they were brought to the sports stadium:

TNI and [DMP] militia led by their East Timorese leader F15 attacked [those of] us who had fled to the forest in the foothills and took [us] back down. On 8 September [they] forced people to come down to Maliana and burned all the people’s houses. On 10 September all the people concentrated in the GOR [stadium] Maliana were taken to Turiscai in West Timor.  

449. Around the time of the attack on the police station, other militia groups across the district of Bobonaro, including Halilintar, Armui (Atabae), Firmi Merah Putih (Balibo), Guntur (Cailaco), Hametin Merah Putih (Bobonaro) and Kaer Metin Merah Putih (Lolotoe) were burning houses and herding people to West Timor. In the district of Bobonaro some 13,500 homes were rendered uninhabitable. Only a handful of villages, in Falintil-controlled areas, were not utterly destroyed. Almost all government buildings, schools and clinics were also destroyed and completely emptied of their contents. Only some churches were left untouched. Some 30,000-40,000 people were deported. Large numbers of people from the villages of Balibo, (Bobonaro), Atabae (Bobonaro), Soilesio, Oeleo, Malilait and Kotabot (Bobonaro, Bobonaro) have yet to return.  

Covalima  

450. Following the pre-ballot violence, Covalima was a key site of post-ballot violence, displacement and destruction. Witness testimonies recount that Laksaur militia together with Indonesian TNI and civilian authorities organised the deportation of all civilians they could find. On 6-7 September the Laksaur commander, Olivio Moruk, drove around Suai Town using a loudspeaker to announce that any villagers remaining on 9 September would be killed. In response, Fearful villagers gathered their belongings and waited for transport along the main roads. Witness testimonies describe how the district administrat, F17, arranged for more than 30 trucks to deport the population. Some community members reported being made to pay Rp800,000 for their own forced deportation.  

Suai Church Massacre  

451. The Commission received numerous testimonies on killings and displacement of those who sought refuge at the Suai Church. One eyewitness vividly recounted the attack on 6 September:
Since July 1999 the situation in Suai had been very unsafe. My husband, who was a member of the CNRT, fled to the mountains. CNRT people were being searched for by Laksaur, so my family and I ran to the Suai Church. On 6 September 1999, at around 2.00pm, the Laksaur militia attacked the Suai Church. During the attack I saw TNI soldiers dressed as civilians using handmade guns, machetes and swords. They killed the parish priest. I saw three Indonesians, the district administrator of Suai, F17, and the Salele Koramil [commander], F18, and another man F19 walk away together, just before the attack. I saw people being attacked with machetes and being shot. We were told to gather and not move, unless we wanted to be killed. At about 10 minutes to three in the afternoon, my family and I were brought to the Kodim in Suai. On 7 September, at about midnight, an East Timorese militia member, F20, who is also a Babinsa in Suai Loro, part of the Koramil, came and threatened me. He raped me and I could not do anything because I was frightened.450

452. After the massacre at the Avé Maria church in Suai, members of Laksaur militia and TNI forced the survivors to the Suai Kodim and the high school (SMP 2) building. Guarded by militia and TNI, they were detained for eight days before being forcibly deported to West Timor, where violations continued. While being held at the school and the Kodim, and later in the camps in West Timor, some women were repeatedly raped by militia (see Chapter 7.7: Sexual Violence). Such violations are described in the two statements below:

We were brought to the Kodim. Every night we were harrassed. They came in and took away women at night. They used a flashlight on us while we were asleep and forced women to come out with them. They would not allow them to bring their things.

We stayed at the Kodim until 14 September 1999, then we were brought to Betun. That night, at about 6.00 or 7.00pm, a hardtop car with four people, two of them armed, took me to the forest. I was raped by two men, one after the other. They were two Laksaur militia, F21, who was a taxi driver, and F22, a man from Fatumean. I did not recognise the two others because it was dark and I was frightened.451

453. Another survivor told the Commission:

Then they forced us to go to the junior high school (SMP2). The militia continued to insult us. We were not given any food for three days. We were hungry and divided pieces of burned corn among the other refugees. We picked up crumbs that had fallen because we were so hungry. At night they disturbed us, especially the women. We were so scared we could not sleep. They turned off the electricity we lit some candles but they were put out by militia. Then the militia took a flashlight and shined it on us women. At night, the militia came with weapons and swords, and they would take women and young girls.452
454. Laksaur militia members, under orders from their East Timorese commanders, F5 and F24, went to the forests in the district of Covalima to kill people hiding there trying to avoid deportation. Among those who fled were villagers from Nikir, Raihun (Tilomar, Covalima) who were attacked by Laksaur militiamen and a member of TNI on 25 September in the Wea Forest. Armed with automatic rifles and machetes, the militia began shooting. They killed Januario Maya, Damião Ximenes and Titua Mali, and injured Juliana Moniz. The militia arrested Juliana along with seven others who did not manage to escape. They deported them to West Timor. Others, like Eugenio de Deus, were able to escape to the forest.

455. The following table contains a selection of statements received by the Commission describing the violence and forced deportations and displacements across the district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HRVD</th>
<th>Name / Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03624</td>
<td>Aquelina Cardoso, Debos, Suai</td>
<td>I was a refugee at the Suai Church when Laksaur militia attacked us on 6 September. I saw East Timorese militias F25 and F26 shoot dead ten people, including a woman named Matilde who was seven months pregnant. We were moved to the local high school (SMP 2). At the school, I was beaten and kicked. One day I saw two Laksaur militia who were also policemen rape four women. Then the four women were taken to Atambua.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05162</td>
<td>Manuela Cardoso, Fatumean</td>
<td>My husband was detained by Laksaur militia at their post in Bubur Fehan on 2 September. Two days later they killed him and dumped his body in West Timor. I was scared for my life and ran to the Koramil in Tilomar. My family and I were taken to West Timor. I was still threatened there by Laksaur militia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08587</td>
<td>Adão Mali, Camanasa Suai</td>
<td>I ran to Mount Fohorau with two friends to avoid the rampage of killing and burning by Laksaur militia against the people in Camanasa (Suai, Covalima). After four days on the mountain, we were attacked by the TNI and militia carrying automatic weapons. My two friends were killed in the shooting. That afternoon I returned with other members of my community and found their remains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01302</td>
<td>Pedro de Jesus, Fatululik</td>
<td>On 4 September Laksaur militia opened fire at me in front of the chapel in Fatuloro. I ran to Beco where a militia member and a policeman from the Lorsos Contingent told me I had to go across the border if I did not want to be shot dead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02025</td>
<td>Carlito da Costa, Fatululik</td>
<td>On 5 September I ran to the forest with other members of my community. On the way Laksaur militia shot dead one of the young men in our group named Domingos Taisa. He was only 17 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02034</td>
<td>Abílio Gusmão, Hopilat, Suai</td>
<td>I had already run to the Suai Church on 27 March 1999, but in April I moved to Hasain Belekasak because the situation was too difficult at the church. I was attacked by militia that month, and one month later Laksaur militia and soldiers from the Suai Kodim burned my house. On 1 July I was again a refugee at the Suai Church. We ran to the mountains on 5 September, fearing an attack by militia and the TNI. My family was forcibly deported to Atambua by Laksaur militia and the TNI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08485</td>
<td>Madeleina de Jesus, Suai</td>
<td>On 5 September I was captured at my home in Babu Lakunak by ten Laksaur militia. They also took my motorbike. I was detained at their post in Leogore for one night. The following day my family and I were moved to West Timor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01266</td>
<td>Lucia Guterres, Fatululik</td>
<td>I was a refugee at the Suai Church when we were attacked on 6 September. Four Laksaur militia took me and another woman out of the church. Right in front of the building I saw a woman named Jacinta Gusmão fall down after being hacked in the neck with a machete by militia. We were boarded on to a truck which took us to the Kodim in Suai. We were held there for six days. On 12 September we were brought to Atambua.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Liquiça**

456. The district of Liquiça was also hit hard by the post-ballot violence. BMP militia forcibly deported thousands of people to the port town of Atapupu, about one hour's drive from Atambua [NTT/ West Timor, Indonesia].
On 31 August Armando da Silva Cloria was captured and beaten by Halilintar militia when he attempted to take food to Falintil soldiers in the forest. He was brought to a BMP post in Batubetilu, Vatovoru (Maubara, Liquiça) where he was detained and tortured for one day. The next day a local nun, Maria Lourdes, negotiated his release. He stayed with this nun in a refugee camp in Atabae (Bobonaro) and was later deported to Atambua (West Timor, Indonesia).

An East Timorese women described the killing of her husband on 7 September by more than six BMP militiamen. Led by F39, the militia shot her husband in the back at least eight times. She ran to Bazartete. Similarly, another East Timorese woman told the Commission that on 7 September BMP militia, while conducting an operation in Leorema (Bazartete, Liquiça) killed her husband. Her husband was standing in front of their house when the BMP militia came and accused him of providing food to Falintil and shot him on the spot. She ran to Ermetalau, Leorema (Bazartete, Liquiça) but was captured by BMP militia, brought to Bazartete, and later deported to West Timor. BMP militia conducted these deportations for at least two weeks. On 19 September 1999 BMP militia hunted down a family who had avoided deportation by hiding in an area in the mountains at Ailetehei (Bazartete, Liquiça) Mariano de Jesus was shot in the shoulder and had to be carried by his mother back to Lauhata village (Bazartete, Liquiça) for medical treatment.

Amelia dos Santos became a widow after the attack on the Liquiça Church on 6 April 1999. She and her husband, Victor Manuel da Conceição, were refugees at the church. BMP militia beheaded her husband at the church door. She continued to suffer violations and, under duress paid a member of the BMP militia to deport her and her children to West Timor:

Close to the day of the ballot, the district administrator of Liquiça, Leoneto, wrote a letter ordering my arrest. I was detained in the Maumeta Police Station for two days. Then I was moved to the Koramil. They said to me, “If autonomy wins you can be a maid to our wives.” When we heard that the pro-independence side won, the militia came to the Koramil threatening me, “You have to die because you chose independence.” I was very frightened. I paid Rp100,000 to a militiaman to bring us to Atambua. In Atambua I met a militiaman who said that after my husband was killed his body was put in a burlap sack. They stripped him naked first because he owed his clothing to the people of Indonesia.

For those who escaped forced deportation to West Timor, survival in the mountains was difficult. Mário dos Santos told the Commission how he ran with his wife and child ran to the mountains at Asa leten (Suai, Covalima). His 7-year-old child, Germano dos Santos, died due to lack of food while they were in the forest.

The central districts

Although the western districts were hardest-hit, the central districts of Aileu, Ainaro, Ermera and Manufahi were not spared post-ballot destruction and deportation. Villages in the district of Aileu were destroyed in a systematic fashion. Beginning on 4 September the following villages were razed on consecutive days: Mantane (4 September), Aisirimou (5 September), Aeloi Malere (6 September), Saboria (7 September, Sukullurai (8 September) and Hoholu (9 September). TNI and militia members reportedly drove around all day on 4 September shooting livestock. Then AHI (Aku Hidup dengan Integrasi/Indonesia) militia rounded up people in aldeias near the main road, including Fatubossa, Hoholete and Liklaukana, and forced them to the town of Aileu. From there they were loaded on to vehicles and taken to Atambua.
The Commission received many statements from Talitu (Laulara, Aileu) describing acts of violence and deportation. For example, Francisco Carvalho reported the burning of his house by AHI militia and then his deportation with and his family to West Timor. Clementino Araújo and the people of Fahiria (Aileu, Aileu) were forcibly displaced to the town of Aileu on 4 September by AHI militia after their homes in Fahiria were burned and their livestock killed. Domingos de Araújo told the Commission that on 5 September he was taken from his home in Aisirimou to the town of Aileu. When he and the people of Aisirimou left their village, AHI militia burned their homes and feasted on their livestock. They were later taken to the provincial police headquarters (Polda) in Dili, before being taken by truck to Atambua.

Others were able to escape deportation. Eduardo Moniz and his family ran to Motakuak River (Aileu, Aileu) on 2 September after his house was attacked by AHI militia. When they returned, after the arrival of Interfet, they found their house burned to the ground and all their possessions destroyed.

In the district of Ainaro an estimated 13,000 civilians were ordered to leave their homes between 4 September and 23 September. Mahidi militia attacked villages, burning homes and blocking all exit routes. In Maubisse the militia first looted and killed the livestock of those people already in the hills. Then they burned the houses. In Hatu Builico residents were ordered out of their houses which were then set alight. People from surrounding villages were assembled near the church in the town of Ainaro and forced onto trucks leaving for West Timor. The militia then burned houses before they too left for West Timor around 22 September 1999.

Prisca da Conceição described the burning of her house and the shooting to death of her husband on 4 September. She ran to the police station for protection. During her 6-day stay there she was continually harassed and threatened by militia bearing traditional arms. On 11 September all those sheltering in at the police station were transported to Betun in West Timor. In Betun they continued to be threatened by Mahidi militia who tried to prevent them from returning home. She was able to return to Ainaro on 22 November 1999.

Statements received by the Commission describe acts of violence perpetrated by Mahidi militia against defenceless civilians. Teresa da Silva told the Commission that she witnessed 15 members of Mahidi, including a police officer who she knew, attack her village of Lepo (Zumalai/Mape, Covalima) on 5 September 1999. They burned houses, including hers, and randomly fired their guns. André da Sena ran into the forest into the area of Lour in the subdistrict of Zumalai (Covalima). On 7 September at least 50 Mahidi militia attacked the village of Fatulebo (Zumalai/Mape, Covalima) burning houses. An East Timorese man was shot in the leg but managed to escape into the forest along with others. Isabel dos Santos was told by a Mahidi militia member that her husband was killed on September 7 1999. However, she found her husband still alive at the TNI post with gaping bayonet wounds to his thigh and back, and they managed to escape and sought refuge in Dare (Dili).

The Commission received testimony about a Mahidi militia attack on the aldeia of Maununo (Ainaro, Ainaro) on 23 September. The militia killed people and burned the houses of the village, and forcibly transported 56 survivors to Betun in West Timor. Regina Beanto described the event:

*Because the militias carried sharp weapons the people were afraid and just obeyed. Otherwise we would be shot dead, our lives taken...People followed the militia on foot. Children, pregnant women and old women and men were all threatened. [We] had to cross the river on foot. People were thirsty and hungry. We had no energy. There were about 50 militia involved.*
[Regina described how a militia member threatened the group with a grenade, then fatally shot her mother in front of her]

A member of the militia pulled my arms and forced me onto a truck. The path to the truck was steep and we were ordered to climb fast. Those who were slow to do so, children and the elderly, were just thrown onto the truck. We just managed to set our feet on the truck…We rode with the militia and went straight to Betun.

In Betun we suffered a lot…We only stayed there for two months. On 26 November we heard information that refugees could return. We registered and went back home right away. 472

468. In the district of Ermera there were not enough vehicles to carry everyone. militia and the TNI arranged for trucks to make several trips to Atambua and return. People were forced from their homes by Darah Integrasi militia and members of TNI and on to trucks. Their houses were set on fire. The Human Rights Unit of UNTAET estimated that after the ballot some 43,000 people were forcibly displaced from Ermera to West Timor, while some 10,000 fled to the mountains. Entire villages were completely emptied and people reported that only families of militia members and the TNI left voluntarily. 473

469. Gracilda told the Commission that Darah Integrasi militia, with TNI members, searched for her husband who had fled to the mountains. She ran to the Letefoho Koramil for protection. While she was there the militia took possession of her truck, filled it with goods from stores and kiosks at the market and ordered her two sons to drive the truck to Atambua. 474

470. Some communities were able to resist deportation. On 9 September Darah Integrasi militia burned 20 houses in the aldeia of Hunda (Letefoho, Ermera) and most people sought protection in the house of the head of the aldeia. 475 On 13 September Darah Integrasi militia and BTT soldiers tried to force Anita dos Santos and her family to go to Atambua. They refused but continued to receive death threats, particularly aimed at a daughter who was a member of UNAMET local staff. On 20 September militia came back and shot at the house, smashing the windows. The family had already left the house to hide. 476

471. The looting and burning continued for two weeks.

472. Teresa de Deus told the Commission that her house was doused with gasoline by Darah Integrasi militia members when they came searching for her two older sons. They had burned a motorcycle owned by this family and were about to take her and her young children to Atambua when Interfet arrived. 477

473. An East Timorese man testified about his forced recruitment into the Darah Integrasi militia. During a meeting between the Darah Integrasi commander, F27, and all the village heads of Letefoho Sub-district, each village head was obliged to provide 50 names of young men to be recruited as militia. His name was among the 25 submitted by the head of his village. He described how the Babinsa and other TNI soldiers posted in his village coordinated militia members to burn most of the houses in the village. He said that on 19 September he fled to Atambua with F27 and other militia members. 478

474. Fokupers, Gender-based Violations of 1999, Submission to CAVR, July 2004, HRVD Statement F9430. Evalina Soares described how her son met a convoy of 20 vehicles returning after taking people from Altsabe (Ermera) to Betun (West Timor) on 16 September 1999. When he tried to run he was shot.
**Displacement and sexual violence**

The Commission found that in times of heightened conflict and wide-spread displacement throughout the mandate period, women became increasingly vulnerable to sexual violence. Sexual violence was experienced by women who were forced to leave their homes and by women who stayed behind in September 1999.

In town of Ainaro one young woman told the Commission that she was raped after most of the population fled after the ballot:

*After the vote everybody had ran away to Ainaro Town. My family—my father, aunt, and younger siblings—all stayed home because we did not know that everybody had left. Many had secretly run to the mountains. A Mahidi member, F56, came to our house carrying a SJ-3 firearm at about 9.00pm. He forced me to come with him. He said that there was nobody left in Cassa. He stripped off all my clothes and raped me. He said that they held power and only they could guarantee my family’s safety. During August and September he raped me five times. My family could not bear this any longer so we ran to Betun in West Timor with my uncle, who was a low-ranking TNI soldier. We were in Betun for five months, until 10 February 2000.*

Some women were raped during deportation to West Timor. Example of testimonies from women who experienced this include:

*We were brought to the Stadium in Maliana by Dadurus Merah Putih militia in order to be deported to West Timor. At about 4.00am I was dragged to the back of the stadium by a militia. He threatened to kill me and to cut off the sexual organs of my brothers in the forest if I did not let him rape me.*

*We ran to the forest after my house was burned by Dadurus Merah Putih militia on 9 September 1999. Two days later my husband returned home to look for food but he was killed by militia. My son and I tried to find him the next day, but on the way there we were captured by militia. They held a knife to my son. I was raped. Eventually, we were forced to go to West Timor.*

Others were threatened in a sexual manner:

*On 8 September Dadurus Merah Putih militia forced me and my grandfather to go to Maliana. My grandfather was very tired and stopped walking. A militia threatened us. He said we were not allowed to stop or else he would put his sword into my vagina. I was very frightened. I carried my grandfather for the rest of the journey to Maliana.*

Finally, women were vulnerable in the refugee camps:

*In October 1999 I was forced by a member of Sakunar militia to go to West Timor. He burned my house and six other houses. I was told to find the men so they could take us all to West Timor, and I was put in a vehicle and brought to West Timor. I was threatened and raped by a member of Sakunar militia in West Timor.*
475. Two women from the aldeia of Orema, Holarua (Same, Manufahi) told the Commission that they were raped on 17 April 1999 during an attack by the ABLAI militia. After the results of the ballot were announced they were deported to Atambua by militia and were only able to return to their homes on 7 December 1999.\(^{485}\)

476. When ABLAI militia attacked her home in Betano on 16 September, Reinalda Tilman ran to the forest leaving her invalid husband, Guilhermeno Tilman. ABLAI militia burned her house while her husband remained inside. He managed to escape but was badly wounded and died three days later.\(^{486}\)

**Eastern districts**

477. Although the relative number of people forcibly deported to West Timor was much lower in the eastern districts (Baucau, Manatuto, Viqueque and Lautém), the Commission received evidence that widespread displacement due to the conflict did occur. Most people ran to the forest and mountains to seek safety and stayed for a short time until the arrival of Interfet in late September. Some were forcibly deported to West Timor by militia and the Indonesian military. Others moved voluntarily to West Timor, particularly East Timorese members of Indonesian security forces and civil servants. A selection of statements received by the Commission has been summarised in the tables below.

478. In Viqueque an estimated 10,000 people were deported. On 20 September four ships with a capacity of 4,000 people each reportedly departed Beaço (Viqueque, Viqueque) for West Timor filled with civilians. An estimated 2,149 homes and 70% of school buildings were destroyed.\(^{487}\)

**Deportation and displacement Lautém, Baucau, Manatuto, Viqueque Districts**

### Table 15 - Lautém District (Team Alfa militia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HRVD</th>
<th>Name and Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02268</td>
<td>Nicolau Mendes, Parlamento, Moro</td>
<td>In September 1999 the people of Lautém were forced by members of Team Alfa to gather in the village of Com, and to board boats going to West Timor. I was forced to join Team Alfa's operations in the villages of Serelau, Baduro and the aldeia of Laikara where they burned people's houses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02270</td>
<td>Ilda Eugenia, Parlamento, Moro</td>
<td>On 12 September a member of Team Alfa who I knew forced me and my family to go to Kupang. We were transported to the port in Com and waited for a boat to take us. At midnight, a TNI member threatened me with a gun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02285; 03941</td>
<td>Jorgê Ximenes, Parlamento, Moro</td>
<td>On 21 September I went with about 20 friends to Ira-ara, Parlamento to look for food because we had run out of food in the forest. Militia from Team Alfa began shooting at us. Two of my friends, Alfredo Araújo and Calisto Rodrigues, were shot dead.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 16 - Baucau District (Team Saka militia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HRVD</th>
<th>Name and Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07746</td>
<td>Tomás Soares, Abo, Quelicuai</td>
<td>On 2 September members of the Team Saka militia and Rajawali soldiers beat me and four of my friends using their weapons and boots. One soldier cut the shoulder of one of my friends with a sword. Then we were brought to Luga, in the village of Abo. We witnessed a member of Team Saka strangle a mother and her son until they urinated. They were being forced to go to Atambua with the father. On our way back from Abo to Quelicai I witnessed Team Saka militia burn my house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02311</td>
<td>Celestina dos Reis, Mulia, Baucau</td>
<td>On 7 September my family and I ran from Uaiaka (Laga) to Quelicai in fear of an attack from TNI and Team Saka. On 10 September a man named Sebastião dos Reis was shot dead by a TNI on board a Milcas (Team Saka) truck. Two of his friends escaped.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The refugees population attempted (Usi militiamen deportations 480. district for much longer than in the rest of the territory. Interfet the 479. 04129 03730 06561 08282 07949 07089 Sakunar occupation, Taquenco to On The were attacked Oecusse was to militia enclave Aitas, Almeida, Antonio Laclo Lakumesak, Koli, Ester Luruk Manatuto Maia, Roserio Laclo Lakumesak, Carvalho, Carceres de Octávio Name and 08282 Location 06561 Name and 07949 Location 06561 Name and Location 07089 Name and Location Table 17 - Manatuto District (Mahadomi militia) Summary On 6 September the people of Laclo were expecting an attack by Mahadomi militia and TNI. We ran to the forest, but came back to our homes later that day. On 7 September we ran back to the forest as Indonesian police and military began burning public buildings and Mahadomi began patrolling Laclo. At least four people were killed and numerous others were wounded by gunshot. On 7 September 20 TNI soldiers carrying weapons (from BTT and Koramil) and three Milsas began shooting in the streets and attacking my house, because my brother was a coordinator of the independence group. Some of the Laclo youth fought back with stones. Two people were shot dead, including my husband, Domingos Carceres. The people ran to Hatu’un where we stayed for two weeks. On 15 September my family, my neighbours and I ran to the mountains because there was shooting between pro-autonomy and pro-independence factions. We went to a place where we had previously hidden food, but were captured by Mahadomi militia and Milsasoldiers and taken to the TNI headquarters. We were handed over to the Mahadomi militia and beaten at their headquarters and then returned to the TNI to be interrogated. My neighbours, Sebastião Biti and Afonso Gonçalves, were dragged away by four TNI and never returned. The next day my wife ran to Dare on 7 September. After the announcement of the ballot result, my wife ran to Dare on 7 September. I stayed home with my mother. The next day at 1.00am Naga Merah militia together with Mobile Brigade police (Brimob) took us by force to the Brimob headquarters in Bairro Pite for interrogation. We were moved to Balai Prajurit, a public meeting place for soldiers. On 13 September, about 20 Naga Merah militia and TNI known to me came looking for me. Because they could not find me they beat my brother-in-law, Afonso Gonçalves, and then shot him dead. On 4 September my family and I fled my home in Rai Tahu, Uma Uain Kraik. On 18 September we could see the smoke from fires burning from where we were. TNI and Naga Merah militia torched the houses and all the possessions of the people of Uma Ain Kraik. Oecusse 479. The enclave district of Oecusse, which had largely escaped forced displacement during the occupation, experienced large-scale deportations following the ballot. The late deployment of Interfet to Oecusse also meant that militia were free to wreak violence and destruction in the district for much longer than in the rest of the territory.488 480. On 6 September UNAMET evacuated its office in Oecusse to Dili and the violence and deportations became more intense. Using machetes and homemade guns, some 200 armed militiamen attacked Tumin, Quebesiolok, Nonquican, all Bobo Manat (Oesilo, Oecusse) and Nibin (Usi Taquenco (Oesilo, Oecusse) killed 17 people with machetes and homemade guns, and attempted to kill another five people. Homes were burned and looted, and the surviving population was rounded up and taken to Imbate in West Timor. On arrival in West Timor the refugees were registered and sorted into age and educational groups. TNI, Polri and members of the Sakunar militia isolated 80 young educated men and tied them up in pairs. Beaten while being
marched to the riverbank in Passabe, they were then killed by being shot and stabbed with machetes. Seven people escaped and ran away into the forest (see Chapter 7.2: Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances). The UNTAET Human Rights Unit reported that following the ballot, some 4,500 people were forcibly deported to West Timor in trucks brought to Oecusse for the purpose. Others were forced to walk to Kefamenanu (North Central Timor, West Timor Indonesia). TNI reportedly distributed firearms and motorbikes to members of Sakunar militia. Militia used trucks to loot all moveable property and deport civilians across the Indonesian border. Members of Sakunar militia went house to house forcing people into trucks and firing their guns into the air as they drove around. Some 10,000 people fled to the hills.

481. By 18 September homes in Pante Makassar had been indiscriminately looted and burned. The only buildings not destroyed were two Catholic churches. Militia and TNI looters took everything: roofs, windows, doors and furniture were all carried off to West Timor. The only areas to avoid destruction were Citrana, Bebo and Baoknana in the sub-district of Nitibe, (where a local leader was able to persuade the militia not to destroy buildings), Mahata in Pante Makassar and Passabe.

482. On 23 September Sakunar militia attacked a refugee camp in Cutete (Pante/Macassar, Oecusse) where 5,000 people were sheltering under the protection of Father Richard Daschbach. The temporary shelters were burned, two people were shot and the refugees scattered. Fredolino Jose Landos da Cruz (Lafu) a 14 year-old boy walked overland, across West Timor, to the border to tell the authorities in Timor-Leste about the dire situation in Oecusse and plead for Interfet to intervene.

483. Militia killings and destruction continued well into October. On 20 October Sakunar militia moved into Maquelab, Taiboco I (Pante Macassar, Oecusse) to search for people hiding in the forest surviving on whatever wild leaves and roots they could gather. The militia found one group of 300 people and forced them back down into town, beating the men. Two CNRT leaders were identified, separated from the group and killed. A Sakunar deputy commander ordered the IDPs to gather together and to sit on the ground. He selected four men, a UNAMET local staff member, two CNRT leaders and a student leader. He forced them to stand and shot them in front of the terrified civilians. Later that day Interfet arrived in Oecusse and the militia fled to West Timor.

484. The following table summarises other testimony on violence, displacement and deportation in the district of Oecusse after the ballot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HRVD</th>
<th>Name and Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00335</td>
<td>Bento Bene, Bene Ufe, Nitibe</td>
<td>In September 1999 the situation was very bad and I had already become a refugee in Oepoli, Kupang. However, I was forced to join Sakunar militia operations in Citrana by East Timorese militia leaders F28 and F29. In Citrana, together with about 30 militia, I dismantled government-owned houses. I told the people in Citrana to flee to Oepoli to escape the wrath of the militia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00346</td>
<td>Simon Palat, Bene Ufe, Nitibe</td>
<td>We ran to the forest when Sakunar began their large-scale operations in September 1999. My house and 65 others were burned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00368</td>
<td>Martino Seco, Banafi, Nitibe</td>
<td>Because of the Sakunar attack in the aldeia of Tumin (Bobometo), I ran to Sai-Tau, West Timor. There, under threat of death, I was forced to join military exercises by an East Timorese Babinsa named F30.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00382</td>
<td>Fernão Sequeira, Lela Ufe, Nitibe</td>
<td>TNI and Sakunar militia burned our homes in September 1999. We were made to pay Rp70,000 to militia to guarantee our safety before we could return to our homes in Oelfab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00383</td>
<td>José Poto</td>
<td>The situation in our village was very tense after Sakunar militia, led by East Timorese F31, killed two CNRT supporters. My wife, Celeste Busan, was stopped by militia who were asking for me. Because she did not give a satisfactory answer she was made to stand under the sun for four hours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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She was about to be deported, together with our two children, when I disguised myself as a militia and took her to safety. Our house and many others were burned by militia, TNI and police.

Fermino Taquil, Bobocase, Pante Makassar

After witnessing the killing of two young men by 12 Sakunar militia in Sikone-Cunha, I ran with at least 15 others to the mountains of Fatubena. We stayed there for a few weeks.

Angelina Cuono, Usi Taco, Nitibe

Thirty militia under the command of East Timorese F32 burned the houses in the village of Usitaco. I ran to West Timor but was continually harassed until I returned.

AM, Tokoluli, Railaku

On 15 September I was raped by an Aitarak militiaman. The next morning I reported this incident to the local Sakunar commander, Domingos Marcelino, but he did nothing about it. Later the Aitarak militiaman came again and tried to kill me near the river. I screamed for help and a local policeman and a relative intervened. After that my family and I became refugees in Hali Ulun, Atambua (West Timor).

Juliana Ua, Bene Ufe, Nitibe

In September 1999 the situation was very bad, so we paid Rp70,000 and a cow to a member of Sakunar militia. But things did not improve and my family and I fled to Neon Ben in West Timor.

Marcolino Tafin, Bobocase, Pante Makassar

On 23 September Sakunar militia under the command of East Timorese F32, F33 and F34 burned all the houses of the village of Bobocase. This included furniture, corn and rice in the granary. They also looted all our livestock. My family and I ran to the forest, hiding in Faub for one week.

Ilena Mauno, Taiboco, Pante Makassar

On 20 October 40 militia attacked our house, saying that we had given refuge to people who have fled to the forest. They killed my husband, Antonio Beno, and tried to burn my house while I was still in it. I fled. Many houses were burned that night, including the house of our neighbour, Quelo Meni. He was also killed near the Suni Ufe River.

Terezinha Kolo, Taiboco, Pante Makassar

On 20 October my husband, children and I ran from an attack by Sakunar militia. My husband was shot in the elbow by an East Timorese militia commander F10. We were brought to the market where four men were killed with a machine gun.

Matias Slain Colo, Taiboco, Pante Makassar

We were taken to the Makelab market where a member of Sakunar militia hit me in the mouth with a machete. My teeth were broken but I stayed silent. About 30 minutes later a Sakunar militia F10 took two men, Ati da Costa and Paulus Cussi, behind the toilets and shot them dead. After a further 30 minutes, F32 came on a motorbike. Without much comment, he called for João Talias, Paulus Kelu, Mateus Ton and Francisco Taek (secretary of Taiboco Village), and shot them one by one. We were told to hold our heads down. We were not allowed to scream or cry.

Fatima Aban, Taiboco, Pante Makassar

On 20 October my family and I ran to Sai Laut. We witnessed the killing of a person there by the TNI and Sakunar militia. We were forcibly brought to Maun-Ana and later moved to a refugee camp in North Central Timor District (TTU) in West Timor.

Refugees in West Timor

By 6 September 1999 a stream of refugees began to arrive in West Timor. This included those who fled of their own accord seeking safety and those who were forcibly boarded on to trucks, boats and planes. Some were able to stay in the homes of family members or had enough resources to rent their own accommodation. Most refugees, however, stayed in groups organised
by their place of origin and remained under the control of militia from those places. The people of Belacasac (Maucatar, Covalima) recalled their time in West Timor:

In the refugee camp in Wemasa (Belu, West Timor) and the surrounding area the people suffered from lack of food, shelter, clothing, and medicines. We were not free to go about our activities. We were always intimidated and terrorised by Laksaur militia under the command of F35.494

486. In total there were at least 200 refugee camps throughout West Timor. According to NGO workers who conducted a documentation project on conditions in the camps, with particular attention to the situation of women refugees, life in the camps was difficult. In some camps barracks were laid out in rows. Other sites consisted of living spaces defined by plastic sheeting or whatever materials could be scrounged, haphazardly constructed around local homes, in woods or along riverbanks. Sanitation facilities in the camps were virtually unavailable. Many refugee locations were close to each other and situated in the midst of West Timorese communities.495
Mass deportation to West Timor

An NGO working in West Timor reported on the situation in Belu regency on 15 September 1999:

The [refugees] arriving from East Timor were primarily from Dili, Maliana, Bobonaro, and Ainaro. Approximately 80% were women, 10% children under 5 years, and 1% infants. There were 20% school age children. Male refugees were rarely found in the camp, except the elderly and children under five.

The first East Timorese refugee exodus entered West Timor on 3 September 1999 using trucks, cars, and ships. The second massive group of refugees came in on 10 September 1999, loaded down with their belongings such as refrigerators, television sets and so on. Along the roads from Kupang to Atambua we also witnessed a lot of looted goods from Dili brought into West Timor by TNI, policemen and militias.

“In the district of Belu-Atambua (about six hours of inland travel from Kupang, or about three hours driving to Dili), the militias, primarily from the groups Altarak and Besi Merah Putih, are roaming the streets on trucks, cars and bikes with guns and swords. These militia have been searching for anyone suspected as pro-independence supporters. Some of the vehicles are clearly UNAMET property. Policemen and TNI are never seen stopping these cars for questioning or obstructing them in any way. Similar cases have been reported in Kupang.

The refugees were placed in public schools, fields, bus terminals, and parish (facilities)/convents. Most of them were from the middle class. The elite have already fled by plane to Darwin or Jakarta. The poor East Timorese were left behind in camps or are hidden in the mountains still in East Timor. The local government of West Timor has provided plastic sheeting for tents and lean-to buildings for refugees. In Nenuk and in Kupang in parishes and convents, refugees sleep in halls and under eaves, in garages and classrooms.

The normal population of the Atambua is about 30,000 people (Regency of Belu: 243,169). This morning the Bishop of Atambua (15 September) informed us that as of this morning the count of refugees in his diocese had already reached some 85,000.498

Humanitarian aid

487. The humanitarian response to the flood of refugees to West Timor was relatively swift. UNCHR and international and local NGOs, as well as Indonesian government agencies and the Indonesian Red Cross had begun to provide emergency shelter, food, water and sanitation by September 1999. Up to the end of March 2000 a huge amount of humanitarian aid had flowed into West Timor. According to NGO observers, standard food allocations consisted of 400 grams of uncooked rice and Rp1,500 for food supplements per person per day.497 The situation worsened when UNHCR and other agencies withdrew from West Timor in September 2000 following the murder of three of members of staff.

488. Despite this humanitarian effort many community members described conditions in the camps in West Timor as desperate:

While we were there we were very poor, threatened, and estranged from our environment—with no opportunity to work or farm, no house to take shelter in. Many died because of lack food, medicine and sanitation and clean water.498
Security

489. The greatest threat experienced by refugees and humanitarian workers was the lack of security. Domestic and international aid workers found ample evidence that armed, or potentially armed, militiamen were the ones actually in charge of the camps. Militiamen often held powerful positions as food distributors, camp leaders or guards at security posts. In a published report, NGO observers reported that they saw guns in the camps or heard references to them. Those who controlled the camps also controlled the aid flowing into them.499

490. Refugees were left largely unprotected from militia violence. Access to the camps was severely restricted by militia intimidation and violence. For example, the Commission received a statement from Deolindo Ximenes describing the abduction and disappearance of Venancio do Rego, the village head of Fatumean Village (Fatumean, Covalima). On 8 September 1999, eight known Laksaur militia took Venancio from the temporary shelter in the camp in Nenuk (Atambua) where he and his family were staying. They beat him and put him on the back of a motorcycle. Venancio never returned to his family.500

491. Militia also continued to loot and assault the refugees in West Timor. Ciprianus José (Covalima) told the Commission that 15 militiamen beat him and his uncle on 9 September 1999 in a camp in West Timor. They were detained and assaulted for one day by militiam carrying guns and machetes and not given any food. The militia stole the buffaloes that they had brought with them from Timor-Leste.501

492. UNHCR staff faced various kinds of harassment from militia in West Timor. This included crowds of militia blocking entrance to the camps, stone throwing and firing guns into the air.502 These militia actions prevented refugees from gaining access to the UNHCR, and as a result the UNHCR was forced to embark on "snatch-and-run" operations. UNHCR would park its trucks outside a camp and move in as quickly as possible to "extract" refugees before militia members were able to organise a response.503 The UNHCR reported a total of 120 incidents of attacks, harassment, and intimidation of humanitarian workers and refugees during its 12-month presence in West Timor. In August 2000 UNHCR was forced to close down its operations in the camps when three of its staff members were attacked and seriously injured while delivering assistance to Naen camp, outside Kefamenaunu Town. A week after resuming operations UNHCR pulled out completely after the murder of three UNHCR staff members in Atambua on 6 September 2000.504 Other international agencies followed. Some local NGOs also briefly stopped humanitarian activities due to the dangerous situation in the camps.

493. Refugees were vulnerable to everyday extortion by militia "protection rackets" in the camps. The Commission was told of an incident where an East Timorese man had his life threatened by members of Sakunar militia after they were captured when he and his family were on the run in the forest in Timor-Leste. They were caught by a member of Altarak militia and taken to West Timor, where they were forced to pay Rp 40,000 to the village head as guarantee for their lives.505

494. In their discussions with the Commission the people of Memo recalled how a village-level Babinsa intimidated and forced the people to cross the border to Turiscari, Hakesak and Atambua (West Timor). Some ran to the house of the East Timorese district administrator F36 only to be ridiculed and beaten.

When we arrived in the refugee camp in Turiscari, we were made to pay the village head to guarantee our safety. They asked us to pay three times. We paid Rp 5,000 to 10,000 for ordinary people and Rp10,000 to 20,000 for civil servants.506
Women refugees

495. Women in the camps were particularly vulnerable, both economically and physically. Female refugees had few economic opportunities to enable them to support themselves. They were dependent on men who were themselves often demoralised by the crowded, lawless post-conflict situation. Reports of domestic violence against women refugees were frequent. In the crowded conditions of the barracks privacy was non-existent. Their exposure, along with the near-absence of law enforcement and the presence of militia in the camps made women refugees particularly vulnerable to sexual assault.

496. The Commission received many statements from women who experienced sexual violence in the refugee camps in West Timor. Some had already been victimised in their homes before their deportation or in the places where they had sought refuge in Timor-Leste. The sexual violence they experienced in the camps was often a continuation of this violation; other women suffered sexual violence only after reaching the camps (see Chapter 7.8: Sexual Violence).

497. BM described how she was virtually a prisoner in the hands of a militiaman who had already raped her in the school in Suai where she was held with other women after the massacre at the Church in the days after the announcement of the results of the ballot:

On 13 September we were forced onto a Hino truck with “SOE-DH” written on it. We were brought to a refugee camp near a soccer field. The militiaman [who had raped me at the school building] found me and said that he had been searching for me for two days. He was angry, and hit me in the mouth with a handmade gun, and kicked me in the chest and back. That night he brought me to his house and raped me again. I was there for three months and 16 days. In the morning when he went out he would lock the door. When he came back he would rape me again. If he had to go somewhere far away he would take me with him. Every night I could not resist, because he would get angry at me and hit me. Every night he would rape me. He did not care, even if I got my period. In October I did not get my period, but he did not care either. When I was two months pregnant I was nauseous and could not eat, but he did not care about my health and continued to rape me...In December when he went to Atambua he did not lock the door. I lied to his sister and said that I would visit my sick mother. Instead I met a young man sent by my mother, who already found out where I was held. He told me that my family was in Namfalus Wemasa. We walked to Namfalus and hid under a tree. The next day, we went back to Suai."

498. Another woman was raped in front of her family:
On 4 September 1999 we ran from Salele to the Suai Church. After the attack on the church, we were brought to Manumutin, Betun. We slept on the verandah of the village cooperative (KUD), because there was no more space. On 11 September, around 2.00am, six Laksaur militia came in a vehicle. Five of them who were armed stayed guarding the vehicle. One person came to where we were sleeping. The man was F37, a Laksaur militia. He pulled out a bloody sword and said, “You see this. This sword is covered with the blood of the four people I have killed.” I stayed quiet. They told me to get into the car…I had no choice because they were armed…F37 pushed me hard. I was raped in front of my own son-in-law. I cried and cried and felt so powerless. It was as if I had died.508

Returning home

499. In interviews in Dili in December 1999, many returnees reported being physically prevented from leaving the West Timor camps.509 As one UNHCR spokesperson put it: “The moment an East Timorese expresses a desire to leave the camps and go home, their life is in danger.”510 One refugee described a daily roll call to make sure everyone was in the camp. They were terrorised at night by militiamen warning them of the dangers of returning to Timor-Leste. A man who had recently returned from Betun (West Timor) said militia members told refugees they would be killed if they went back to Timor-Leste. Another man said his family, who were staying in a house in Silawan (Atambua) wanted to leave but were afraid of the militias. When asked to fill out government forms stating their preferred destination, they had said they wanted to stay even though it was not true.511 The effect of these physical threats was reinforced by a campaign of misinformation that told the refugees that war and chaos continued to rage in Timor-Leste. Refugees were told that there would be revenge attacks against them if they went back, and that Australian peacekeepers were committing atrocities including raping East Timorese women.512

500. Amelia Madeira told the Commission that refugees had to leave all their belongings and pay a fee in order to be able to return home:

After the Laksaur militia burned all the houses in Suai on 7 September, I ran with other members of my community to Alas [Betun, West Timor]. After three weeks we wanted to return home. The TNI and a village official from [my village of] Foholulik [Tilomar, Covalima] confiscated all our belongings. They said if you want to go home you have to leave all your possessions behind. Each family had to pay him and the soldiers Rp75,000 each. There were about 100 families wanting to return.513

501. In a discussion with the Commission, the people of the village of Beco II (Covalima) recalled the dangers of revealing that they wanted to go home and what they found upon return:

After things became calmer in Timor-Leste our desire to return had to be kept secret, because it was dangerous if people knew. Mutual suspicion in the camps was very high…
people came out of the forest and down from the mountains, but they had no houses or food or medicines. They returned to their villages to find their homes and schools had been turned to ashes. They found that all their possessions were gone and that they were poor. They felt very helpless.514

7.3.7 Findings

502. The Commission finds that:

1. The people of Timor-Leste experienced repeated periods of displacement, often in massive numbers, between 1975 and 1999. Most individual East Timorese people alive today have experienced at least one period of displacement. Many have experienced several. All displacements caused major disruption to the lives of those affected. Some directly caused major loss of life.

2. At a minimum, during the period 1975-1999, 84,200 people died due to hunger and illness in excess of the peacetime baseline for these causes of death, and that the figure could possibly be as high as 183,000. The overwhelming majority of these deaths occurred in the years 1977-1978 and during the period of large-scale Indonesian military attacks on Fretilin bases in the interior where large numbers of civilians were living and in 1979 during the subsequent period of Indonesian military detention camps and ABRI/TNI-controlled resettlement areas.

3. These displacements took many forms, occurred in a complex variety of circumstances and lasted for periods that could extend from days to years. For example:
   
   • In the period before and during the civil war of August-September 1975 displacement commonly took the form of flight to escape coming under the control of or being subjected to violence by one of the parties to the conflict.
   
   • After the Indonesian invasion in December 1975 some people fled spontaneously either in response to perceived threats or to escape a very real and present threat. At the same time Fretilin organised the evacuation of communities, sometimes resorting to coercive methods.
   
   • When the Indonesian military stepped up its attacks on Fretilin and the population under its control from 1977 onwards, some groups scattered, others were forced to keep constantly on the move to evade capture, and yet others moved in an orderly fashion to new locations.
   
   • The massive Indonesian assaults on the population concentrations still under Fretilin control that lasted from late 1977 until the end of 1978 ended with tens of thousands of people being forced into resettlement camps under the strict control of the Indonesian military. In these and subsequent displacements by the Indonesian military, such as those to the island of Ataúro in the early 1980s, the displaced found themselves being subjected to a rigorous form of detention intended to further Indonesian military objectives.
   
   • The large-scale movements that took place in the period surrounding the Popular Consultation of 30 August 1999 involved both flight from TNI and militia violence and forced deportations to West Timor.

503. Whatever form it took displacement invariably had a seriously damaging impact on those affected, including by ending in the deaths of tens of thousands of people.
4. Death was caused by famine, famine-related diseases, vulnerability to sickness from hunger, fear or exhaustion and a lack of access to medical care. It is likely that more people died from the effects of displacement than from any other violation. While the actual number of deaths is incalculable.

5. For the survivors, displacement was the direct cause of a deep and abiding anguish at the loss of family members in horrific circumstances, which they were powerless to control or change. Displacement also meant vulnerability to other violations, including arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, forced labour and forced recruitment. It also regularly entailed hunger and deprivation of the means of making a livelihood through the destruction of or loss of access to food crops, livestock, housing, agricultural implements and land.

6. Displacement also disrupted the fragile subsistence economy on which the majority of the population depended. One indication of this disruption was the dramatic fall between 1973 and 1980 in the number of livestock, which are crucial as factors of production, means of transportation and sources of wealth in East Timorese agricultural communities. The devastation of Timor-Leste’s livestock was closely related to the wider disruption created by displacements, resulting as it did from their abandonment by fleeing communities, their intentional destruction by Indonesian forces, their consumption by a population desperate for any form of sustenance, and their deaths due to starvation and bombardment.

7. In Timor-Leste displacement was a violation that primarily affected communities. Its affect on communities was often long-lasting and utterly destructive of their integrity. Displacement was often used indiscriminately by the Indonesian military against communities or groups within communities as form of collective punishment and sometimes as a form of hostage taking.

8. Displacement was a persistent theme running throughout the period of the Commission’s mandate. This was so not just because 1974-99 were years of conflict in Timor-Leste. The Commission believes that some of the most harmful impacts of displacement were the direct result of mistaken policy decisions. The Commission believes, for example, that Indonesia displaced people from their homes repeatedly in order to control them, used food as a weapon of war, refused for reasons of military strategy to allow international humanitarian agencies access to Timor-Leste until famine had reached catastrophic proportions, and forcibly displaced East Timorese civilians to West Timor for purely political ends.

The internal conflict August-September 1975

504. The Commission finds that:

9. In the period after the formation of political parties but before the outbreak of the internal armed conflict there were instances where communities fled to escape violence at the hands of their political opponents. The scale of these displacements was relatively small and the length of time for which people were displaced relatively short.

10. The internal armed conflict in August and September 1975 resulted in population displacements. Fearing persecution from opposing parties, many people fled their homes to safety. Fretilin supporters were forced to leave their homes which were burnt by UDT supporters. After 20 August 1975, UDT supporters who felt threatened by Fretilin, spontaneously crossed the border into West Timor, Indonesia. Others were forced across the border by members of UDT. Smaller numbers went to Australia, Portugal and other countries, either at this time or later after a period spent in the camps in West Timor.
11. The Commission was unable to determine with any certainty the number of refugees in West Timor. The international aid agencies operating in West Timor at the time seem to have relied on figures received directly from the Indonesian authorities, who claimed that 40,000 East Timorese had taken refuge in West Timor. A wide range of informed East Timorese people who were in West Timor at the time have contested these figures. These latter sources say that the actual number of refugees in West Timor was significantly lower than the Indonesian figure. These sources have said that the Indonesian authorities inflated the figures both in order to receive larger quantities of relief aid than were justified by the true number of refugees in need of assistance and to create the impression that the scale of the fighting was greater than it actually was, that large numbers of East Timorese were unwilling to accept a Fretilin administration and that Fretilin’s victory in the civil war posed a threat to regional stability.

12. The Commission is uncertain of the number of people who were internally displaced at this time. It has no way, for example, of verifying the ICRC’s estimate that more than 50% of the population was displaced during this period. Whatever the number, most had spontaneously returned to their homes within weeks of having fled them.

13. A small number of the people displaced within Timor-Leste and of people who fled over the border into West Timor died as a result of the deprivation they suffered while displaced. In the camps in West Timor there were also cases of people being killed. Usually these people were Fretilin supporters who had been coerced into crossing the border.

14. International humanitarian agencies were able to provide emergency food and medical aid inside Timor-Leste and in the camps in West Timor.

15. The de facto Fretilin administration in principle allowed aid agencies access to all areas of Timor-Leste. In practice the main agency providing food aid to the population, the ICRC, chose to restrict its relief activities to a small area around Dili, while supplies provided by the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) were distributed by Fretilin in Fretilin-controlled areas. All aid programmes had only just got underway when they had to be abandoned in early December 1975 because of the impending Indonesian invasion.

16. Aid flows to refugees in West Timor after the invasion also diminished. The testimony of people who were in the camps, including church people, indicates that the food was used as both a political tool and as a means to recruit East Timorese to fight as auxiliaries with the Indonesian army. There is also evidence that food and other assistance was withdrawn in April 1976 when East Timorese in West Timor refused to endorse Indonesia’s political goals in Timor-Leste. Thereafter the refugees suffered severe hardship, and some died.

The invasion

505. The Commission finds that:

17. Large numbers of people fled their homes in anticipation of and following the Indonesian invasion. Large numbers of people fled major population centres as Indonesian forces moved to control them from December 1975 onwards. Most who fled did so in fear for their lives.

18. Many people living in areas outside Indonesian control and in areas where fighting was not going on still fled their homes as soon as they heard that Indonesian forces had invaded. They fled for a number of different reasons: in fear for their lives; in response to Indonesian claims that they would achieve a quick victory; on learning of Indonesian atrocities in the early days of the invasion; and because Fretilin ordered them to do so.

19. The evacuation of the population took place in a variety of circumstances. Some evacuations from towns and villages were unorganised; others were coordinated by the Fretilin-led resistance.
20. The level of organisation of the evacuations varied according to the extent to which Fretilin itself had developed its own organisation during the period of its de facto administration and whether it had taken measures to prepare for the evacuation of the population.

21. Fretilin had a declared policy of evacuating the civilian population to safety and of organising a national liberation movement in the mountains and interior. The Commission learned of instances where, to achieve that objective, it forced communities to evacuate, including people who were reluctant to leave their homes.

22. The Commission has been unable to calculate the number of people who were displaced during the first two years of the occupation. The eventual movement of around 300,000 people into Indonesian-controlled centres by 1978-79 is the best pointer to the massive scale of the displacement which began in late 1975. In view of the fact that a large number of people died in the mountains, and therefore never became part of the Indonesian-controlled population, the actual number of people who were displaced after the invasion is likely to be higher than 300,000.

23. The mass evacuation to the mountains, including Fretilin’s decision to take large numbers of people with it, was made without sufficient thought about the problems of housing, feeding and protecting such a large population. In many Fretilin-controlled areas living conditions in the months after the initial flight were extremely difficult. Their difficulty was somewhat alleviated once structures had been set up to mobilise the population for such tasks as communal farming and to provide for the needs of the most vulnerable. However, even where such organisation was in place, the Commission learned, the death rate continued to be abnormally high.

24. The Commission received evidence suggesting that in the years 1976-78 the desire to surrender was geographically widespread and persistent among the population under Fretilin control. It is impossible to gauge how many people wanted to surrender, particularly as those expressing their feelings on this matter were liable to severe punishment, including death. The Commission did receive testimony supporting the conclusion that some communities understandably concealed their true feelings on this matter. At the same time it also heard of instances where civilians given the opportunity to surrender refused to take it and where, when people were finally ordered to surrender, they did so with great reluctance.

25. For most people who stayed in the mountains until the end of Operation Seroja in late 1978-79, the pattern of their lives was that after a period of relative calm and adequate living conditions they were constantly on the move until the final stages of the military campaign. In these stages they were hemmed in with thousands of others in an isolated location where they came under terrifying attack by Indonesian forces using all the means at their disposal to force them into submission, including starvation. The incessant bombardments to which they were subjected made it impossible for them to look for food, much less grow or harvest it. In these final stages of resistance the number of people who died increased sharply.

26. Some communities either did not flee the invading forces or surrendered early to them. However, Indonesian forces also confined these communities in designated areas where they suffered from lack of food, restricted movement and harsh repression. The Commission was told that conditions in the camps where people who had surrendered to or had been captured by Indonesian forces in the first two years of the occupation were so inimical to survival that many deaths by deprivation occurred. All the elements that led to deaths by deprivation on a massive scale in later years were already present during this early period: the refusal to grant direct access to international aid agencies, minimal provision of food and medicines, the concentration of the population in camps, tight restrictions on freedom of movement which made it difficult to grow food crops, the use of intimidation and terror to punish and ensure the compliance of camp inmates.
Food crops and livestock destroyed

506. The Commission finds that:

27. From 1976 to 1978 the Indonesian armed forces systematically destroyed or removed food crops, food stores, agricultural implements, gardens and fields, and livestock belonging to East Timorese people who had fled from their homes and villages.

28. The Commission has not been able to obtain any documentary material which explains the thinking underlying this strategy. However, it can only conclude that the aim of these Indonesian military operations was to starve the civilian population under Fretilin control into surrendering, and to deny Fretilin/Falintil access to food sources.

29. The impact of the destruction of farmers’ capital embodied in their gardens, agricultural implements and livestock was that when they did return to their home villages they found it difficult to resume agricultural activity.

30. As large numbers of East Timorese civilians came under direct Indonesian control the Indonesian military conducted special operations to destroy cultivated and wild food sources to deny food to the Resistance. This practice also resulted in long-term damage to food sources for all East Timorese people.

31. The Indonesian military also regularly burned and destroyed the crops and livestock of people already under their control, either as a form of punishment, as a means of ensuring that they did not stray beyond the limits of the camp to farm their plots, or to force them to move to a new place and to deter them from returning to their original homes once they had moved.

32. The Commission also received some reports of Falintil forces destroying agricultural plots of the local population. These were isolated reports of isolated incidents, and did not point to a systematic or widespread pattern.

Life and death in the mountains

507. The Commission finds that:

33. For many East Timorese civilians life in the rural areas and mountains was relatively peaceful and stable for the first year or two after the invasion. This changed when Indonesian military operations began in their area.

34. During this “normal” time, in many areas of Timor-Leste under their direct control, the Fretilin leadership took steps to organise food production and distribution and to provide basic healthcare. In the zonas libertadas it pursued this policy, which relied heavily on the support of the civilian population. In many of the cases of which the Commission has learned, attaining the level of organisation needed to meet the needs of the population under its control took time. In the period before minimal self-sufficiency was achieved the evacuated population suffered severe deprivation that caused some to die.

35. The Fretilin/Falintil leadership imprisoned people under its control for allegedly wanting to surrender. Preventing surrenders may have been a justifiable action to protect the security of Resistance bases and the civilian population in them. However, the persecution of people suspected of wanting to surrender became indistinguishable from the political conflict within the Resistance.

36. Reported torture or other inhumane treatment by Fretilin/Falintil and extended time in primitive prison pens for civilians attempting surrender or suspected of spying was cruel and excessive, and led to the deaths of many detainees. Fretilin/Falintil also executed persons suspected of wanting to surrender, often on the flimsiest of evidence and without following judicial proceedings.
37. Fretilin policy preventing surrenders changed only in late 1978 when it was forced on the leadership by the critical situation of the civilian population. The Commission is unable to determine how many people did want to surrender. It has, however, received testimony both that ordinary civilians who were offered the option of surrender before late 1978 refused to take it and that when finally ordered to surrender some were reluctant to do so. In some cases this reluctance appears to have driven by a determination to continue the struggle against the invading forces at all costs. However, the Commission also received testimony indicating that well-grounded fears of ill-treatment by Indonesian forces was also a reason for their reluctance. In the final stages of their displacement under Fretilin control the civilian population faced an agonising choice between death in the mountains and the possibility of a similar fate if they surrendered to Indonesian forces. In fact the conditions after surrender were not sufficient to sustain life.

38. Large numbers of people died of hunger and hunger-related disease while under Fretilin control. Although people were dying throughout the period when they were fleeing the Indonesian military or living under Fretilin control, the largest number of deaths occurred in the final months before surrender, both as a result of Indonesian bombardment and of hunger and hunger-related disease.

39. Between mid-1977 and late 1978 the Indonesian military launched a military campaign to crush the Resistance, conquer the extensive areas still outside its control and force the population living in those areas to surrender. Before launching this “encirclement and annihilation” campaign Indonesian forces constantly harried the population, forcing them to make repeated flights. These flights typically ended with many thousands of people being concentrated in particular areas, such as Mount Matebian, the Natarbora Plain, Fatubesi in Ermera, Mount Ilimanu in Manatuto and the coastal areas of Alas in Manufahi and Beco and Halo in Covalima, where they then came under intense bombardment from the land, sea and air.

40. As the intensity of Indonesian military operations increased in particular areas many displaced people were continually on the move to avoid death, injury or capture. While on the run from Indonesian attacks, many East Timorese civilians died from deprivation due to hunger, exhaustion, sickness and lack of access to medical services. Life on the run meant that food cultivation was virtually impossible.

41. In their attacks on Resistance bases or Fretilin-led population groups on the run, Indonesian forces did not discriminate between civilians and combatants. Many civilians were killed in these attacks.

42. As large concentrations of people came under attack, the wild foods and natural water sources that were their only means of sustenance often became contaminated. In most cases where witnesses reported the occurrence of such contamination it appears to have been the result of routine bombing attacks. However it was alleged that in the attack on Lesemau in Ermera in mid-1978 Indonesian forces used toxic bombs which contaminated food and water supplies in the area.

43. Famine conditions began to emerge in Timor-Leste some time between late 1977 and late 1978—that is death from hunger and associated weakness began to occur on a large scale. These conditions were increasingly present among people on the run and among those driven in large numbers into circumscribed areas where encirclement by Indonesian forces effectively prohibited further movements, even in search of food. During this phase famine was the direct result of military operations; it was not caused by drought.

Camps and settlements under Indonesian military control

508. The Commission finds that:
44. People who surrendered or were captured by the Indonesian military had to live in camps for up to several years. The camps were supervised and monitored closely by the military. They were created for security reasons, not for the welfare of the population in them.

45. Civilians who surrendered or were captured were first moved to transit camps for registration and interrogation before being relocated to internment and resettlement camps and later to resettlement villages. While security controls eased at each of these stages, a defining characteristic of all such camps or villages was restricted or no access to gardens located further than a specified distance from these settlements.

46. The Indonesian military gave a higher priority to the attainment of military objectives than to meeting its humanitarian obligations to the inmates of these camps. From the time of their creation, provision for basic food and survival needs in the camps was inadequate.

47. The camps became the sites for a fully-fledged famine in which unknown numbers died. Already in a weakened state when they entered the camps, internees endured extended periods without access to food gardens or emergency humanitarian aid. The food that they received from the military was utterly inadequate to keep them alive. It was also often inappropriate for people already suffering severe malnutrition. Even the meagre rations that the military made available to camp inmates were distributed in a discriminatory way. The Commission has learned that in exchange for food the military and their auxiliaries extorted money, family heirlooms and other valuables (for example gold and traditional beads), and sexual favours.

48. Although the military campaign waged by the Indonesian military in 1977-78 had aimed precisely at the outcome it achieved—namely the mass surrender of the population under Fretilin control into areas under Indonesian control—the Indonesian authorities made little or no preparation for meeting the barest needs of this population for shelter, food and medicines. In the early stages of this campaign it must have become apparent to the Indonesian military that the surrendering population was seriously debilitated and in dire need of these essentials for their survival. However, rather than creating conditions that might avert famine, it both neglected the basic needs of the surrendering population and imposed restrictions and sanctions on them that were bound to make their already dire circumstances even worse.

49. The scale of the famine in mid- to late 1979 and the fact that it was rapidly worsening can be seen in international aid agency reports of the time. For example, as a result of its survey in April 1979 US Catholic Relief Services estimated that 200,000 people were in a "serious or critically malnourished condition". By September 1979 it found that the number of people in this condition was closer to 300,000. The International Red Cross described 60,000 out of the 75,000 people it surveyed in July 1979 as being "in a state of alarming malnutrition" including "20,000 dying from hunger".

Humanitarian aid

50. The Commission finds that:

50. The Indonesian Government refused permission for any international humanitarian aid agencies to operate inside Timor-Leste from the day of its invasion on 7 December 1975 until late 1979. There can be no doubt that the Indonesian military authorities in Timor-Leste were aware of the rising death toll due to famine in the camps under its control.

51. From at least late 1976, the Indonesian Government allowed food aid to reach the people and camps under its control through the Indonesian Red Cross and the Catholic Church. All reports to the Commission show this aid was far too little or too late to prevent famine in the camps between 1977 and 1979. The efforts of the Catholic Church to provide more aid and to handle or monitor its distribution were systematically frustrated.
52. Reports of death from protein shock after receiving food aid and the near universal observation of former inmates that the rice and corn they received were mouldy demonstrate the unfitness of the Indonesian authorities to handle famine relief.

53. Reports of famine began to reach international aid agencies as early as April 1977, prompting requests to the Indonesian Government for aid agencies to enter the territory. A high-level visit by nine foreign ambassadors in September 1978 to resettlement camps in Timor-Leste increased international awareness of the need for a major humanitarian aid programme. Yet the Indonesian Government did not permit international agencies to operate in Timor-Leste for another 12 months.

54. The Indonesian Government's refusal to admit international aid programmes, even when the need for them was widely known internationally, was almost certainly because the Indonesian military did not want any witnesses or impediments to its military campaign to bring the population under its control and weaken the Resistance. The Commission believes that the timing of the decisions to permit CRS and the ICRC to carry out surveys in Timor-Leste, in April and July 1979, and then to allow the agencies' operations to begin only in September 1979 is highly suggestive. What had changed by that time was not that the scale of the famine had reached massive proportions—that had already been known many months earlier—but that the Indonesian military believed that the campaign to destroy the Resistance was essentially over.

55. Once admitted, International aid organisations were still restricted in their operations. They were permitted few non-Indonesian personnel on the ground in Timor-Leste. They faced frequent impediments to their work in what was already a difficult operational setting. They were not permitted to deliver aid to areas outside Indonesian military control.

56. The international aid operation that began in late 1979 reached most of the population in the camps and others in need. It greatly relieved the famine conditions prevailing across Timor-Leste.

57. The Commission received evidence from East Timorese people who had worked with the international aid agencies, from church people and from the intended recipients of the aid that relief aid was routinely diverted from its supposed target, either to be sold for personal gain or to be used for personal consumption by members of the Indonesian military and some staff members of the aid agencies in question.

Strategic relocation villages and internment

510. The Commission finds that:

58. From the early 1980s the Indonesian authorities introduced new forms of displacement. These were related to two separate developments. The first was the decision to dismantle or scale down the resettlement camps that had been established to accommodate the population that had surrendered in the late 1970s. The second was the reorganisation of the Resistance as a guerrilla force capable of launching localised attacks on ABRI.

59. For many the decision to move them out of resettlement camps did not lead to a marked improvement in their living conditions. There were some positive aspects, in particular the provision of schools, clinics, markets and easier transportation. However, the Commission has overwhelming evidence that at least during the first half of the 1980s, this phase of displacement was often managed in such a way as to ensure that those displaced did not enjoy the supposed benefits of the programme. Yet again it was a programme that served military objectives, but did not guarantee survival. For many of those moved, their transfer from resettlement camps to strategic villages, new villages and even back to their own villages did not substantially improve their lot. Restrictions on freedom of movement continued to have a serious impact on food production and thus on people's well-being.
Moreover, even after the resettlement camps were dismantled, settlement patterns in Timor-Leste remained radically different from their pre-invasion form. Even today there are many signs of it. Many people were forced to live in towns and along major roads. Many fertile areas of the country were abandoned.

The displacements carried out in response to signs of that the Resistance had survived the destruction of its bases were heavily punitive. These displacements took place following guerrilla attacks, defections to the Resistance by East Timorese who had been enlisted into Indonesian civil defence units, and the establishment of clandestine support networks. They involved the collective punishment of whole communities and the proxy punishment of relatives of people still fighting in the forest and interior.

A cumulative total of more than 6,000 people were forcibly displaced to the island of Ataúro between mid-1980 and 1984. At its peak in late 1982 the displaced population exceeded 4,000. The majority of people sent to the island were not political activists or Resistance fighters, but people from the 12 districts (excluding Oecusse) who were relatives of or were suspected of having contact with Resistance fighters still in the forest. They consisted predominantly of women and children, and found it extremely difficult to fend for themselves in an environment which was extremely barren. They were kept on the island for periods ranging from a few months to six years. Those who arrived in the first wave of forced displacement were not given adequate food or other support. The Indonesian military was also negligent in its provision of basic medical care, clean water, sanitation and shelter. About 5% of the people displaced to Ataúro died there. Some were able to survive because they received help from the local population, even though an influx of people in numbers that were not far short of the island's total indigenous population put a severe strain on its meagre resources. Conditions improved when the International Red Cross was permitted entry in 1982. When people were released from Ataúro, some were merely transferred to other areas for a further period of internment.

Some of those detained after attacks by members of the Resistance on military posts and units were also sent to Ataúro. Others were displaced from their home villages and sent to areas where they had to rebuild their lives virtually unaided in extremely inhospitable environments. This was the fate of many of the inhabitants of the villages in Ainaro and Manufahi that took part in the Kablaki uprising of August 1982 and of the mainly women survivors of the mass executions that followed the Kraras (Viqueque) uprising in August 1983. The latter group were sent to the previously uninhabited area of Lalerek Mutin where they were left to fend for themselves under tight military surveillance. The population of Lalerek Mutin suffered sexual violations, disappearances, hunger, disease and death there. Their treatment was strikingly similar to that of the people from Ainaro who had been moved to the villages of Raifusa and Dotik in the district of Manufahi the previous year.

Displacement before and after the Popular Consultation in 1999

The Commission finds that:

There was a direct connection between the creation of anti-independence militias in Timor-Leste from late 1998 and an upsurge in violence which caused fear, displacement, deprivation and death.

This fear was compounded by a widespread understanding that despite the obligation of the Indonesian Government under the 5 May Agreements to create and maintain a secure environment for the Popular Consultation, the militia groups had the support of the TNI and the wider governmental apparatus, and on that basis enjoyed impunity for their actions. Most of the violence and intimidation in Timor-Leste in 1999 was conducted by militia members rather than Indonesian military personnel. Much of this violence did however occur in the presence of armed Indonesian military or police who took no action to prevent it. People seeking police protection from militia violence were denied assistance.
66. There is strong evidence that the militia groups forcibly recruited members into their ranks. One reason why people fled their homes was to avoid recruitment into the militias.

67. Militia violence before the Popular Consultation reached a peak in April 1999 with attacks in many places, the massacre at the Liquiça Church and spontaneous flight of many people. They sought refuge in the remote locations in the countryside, with relatives in other areas and in church compounds. Some, from the western districts and Oecusse, crossed the border into West Timor (Indonesia).

68. The objective of militia violence was to win a majority for the autonomy option in the ballot of 30 August. In the lead-up to the Popular Consultation it used violence indiscriminately to secure that outcome. Thus, while it also targeted those who were prominently identified as pro-independence, such as leaders of CNRT and members of pro-independence student organisations, ordinary civilians and whole communities and those who offered them protection, including the Church, also became its victims. One reflection of these priorities is that the militias (and the TNI) did not engage militarily against Falintil forces.

69. Under threat of this indiscriminate violence from militia groups, large numbers of people stayed away from their normal places of residence. One authoritative source estimate as many as 60,000 were displaced. Many returned only to register or vote before again returning to places of refuge.

70. As the number of displaced persons grew and settled in large concentrations in places where they thought they would find safety, their living conditions deteriorated, in some cases becoming acute.

71. The Indonesian authorities and their militia allies resorted to a variety of means, including bureaucratic obstructionism and violence, to thwart attempts by local NGOs, supported by UNAMET and UN agencies, to give humanitarian assistance to the displaced.

72. Poor security conditions and the associated flight of large numbers of people during 1998 and 1999 disrupted the planting of food crops. This compounded food shortages caused by a poor harvest in 1998 due to low rainfall.

73. The comprehensive “scorched earth” tactics employed by the TNI and the militia groups after the Popular Consultation, marked by threats of violence, killings, mass forced deportations and the destruction of public and private buildings throughout Timor-Leste, caused the bulk of the population to become displaced, either internally or externally.

74. About 250,000 people were displaced to West Timor after the ballot. Detailed plans for the evacuation of a large proportion of the population, involving several Indonesian Government ministries, had been drawn up well before the ballot. Most of these people were forcibly displaced, that is, violence or the threat of violence was used to ensure that the civilian population complied with the wish of the Indonesian authorities that they should leave Timor-Leste.

75. East Timorese in camps and other places in West Timor where people had settled continued to be subject to the control, intimidation and violence of militia members. Many who wanted to return to Timor-Leste were prevented from doing so by a combination of threats and misinformation from militia members.

76. While international aid organisations were able to distribute humanitarian assistance to the forcibly displaced, they were also subject to control, intimidation, attacks and killings by militia members.

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CAVR Community Profile, Saburai Village, Maliana Sub-district, Bobonaro District, 13 January 2003.
HRVD Statements 01874, 01195, 08239, 02594, 05220 eyewitness accounts of Halilintar militia burning and deporting people to West Timor. HRVD Statement 05597 describes an attack by Kaer Metin Merah Putih on the people of the aldeia of Baoutal Suco Deudet on September 16 1999. The people were able to escape to the forest, while their houses were burned to the ground.

Forced deportations by Laksaur militia and TNI around Suai Town are described in HRVD Statements 2023; 8485; 7385 and 3672.


CAVR Community Profiles, Belakasak, Maucatar Sub-district, Covalima District, 29 March 2003, and CAVR Community Profile Fatuleto, Zumalai Sub-district, Covalima District, 29 March 2003.

HRVD Statements 08463, 03643 and 03638 recount details of the Suai Church Massacre on September 6 and their subsequent deportation; HRVD Statements 05116 and 08577 describe the attack on the church; HRVD Statement 08459 gives an account of the assaults and rapes after the church attack.


Ibid, HRVD Statement F9264.

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472 Fokupers, *Gender-based Violations of 1999*, Submission to CAVR, July 2004, HRVD F9374; See also HRVD F9371 [Sebastiana da Costa] and HRVD F9395 [Casilda da Costa] for similar accounts of forced deportation at gunpoint by Mahidi militia on 23 September 1999.

473 UNTAET Human Rights Unit Report on 1999 District Ermera; HRVD Statements 2198; 8083; 3510 and 8303 describe forced deportation to West Timor by Darah Merah Integrasi militia and TNI.

474 HRVD Statement 1101.

475 HRVD Statement 1046.

476 HRVD Statement 1774.

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478 HRVD Statement 1062.

479 HRVD Statement F9387.

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486 HRVD Statement 4084.


489 Ibid; see also Robinson, *East Timor 1999*, OHCHR submission to CAVR., April 2004.

490 Ibid.

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493 Ibid.

494 CAVR Community Profile, Belakasak Village, Maucatar Sub-district, Covalima District, 29 March 2003.


496 Jesuit Refugee Services, Kupang Report, 15 September 1999.

497 Campbell-Nelson et al, op cit.

498 CAVR Community Profile, Fatuleto Village, Zumalai Sub-district, Covalima District, 21 May 2003.

499 Campbell-Nelson et al, op cit.

500 HRVD Statement 5188.

501 HRVD Statement 5173.


HRVD Statement 0334.

CAVR Community Profile, Maliana Memo, Bobonaro District, 21 January 2003.


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